



DEACONESSES  
ANCIENT AND  
MODERN



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Deaconesses, ancient and  
modern









# DEACONESSES

## ANCIENT AND MODERN

BY

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*The Memory of the Just, Methodism and the Temperance Reformation,  
Rays of Light in the Valley of Sorrow, etc.*

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The Lord giveth the word :

The women that publish the tidings are a great host.

—PSA. lxviii, 11.

Συνίστημι δὲ ὑμῖν Φοίβην τὴν ἀδελφὴν ἡμῶν, οὖσαν διάκονον τῆς ἐκκλησίας  
τῆς ἐν Κεγχραῖς.—ROM. xvi, 1.

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TO THE  
DEACONESSES OF THE CHURCH OF GOD;  
IN MEMORY OF THE ANCIENT, IN SYMPATHY WITH THE  
MODERN;  
WITH PROFOUND RESPECT FOR WOMAN'S WORK  
IN EVERY SPHERE,  
THIS VOLUME IS MOST RESPECTFULLY  
Dedicated.



## P R E F A C E .

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THIS work is an attempt to bring before the reader a brief historical outline of the ancient order of deaconesses, its disappearance in the Middle Ages, and its revival in modern times.

The condition of the world calls for the employment of all agencies that can lessen its sorrows and shed the light of Gospel truth into its dark places. The contest between the forces of good and evil is becoming more severe, and the zeal of the Church more intense. New instrumentalities for good are sought, and old ones long discarded are brought into requisition.

The simple forms of labor existing in apostolic times were destroyed by priestly assumptions and ambition, and woman as an officer of the Church was set aside. The work of the Reformation is not yet complete; the wheat is not all winnowed from the chaff. A brighter day is dawning. As the Church is baptized with the Holy Ghost she goes back to the spirit of primitive Christianity, recognizes the ministry of woman, and sends her forth with blessing and authority. But the Church will not reach her highest development and power until, in spiritual right and privilege in Christ Jesus, every line of distinction

between male and female is obliterated as it is between Jew and Greek, bond and free.

Should these pages contribute any thing to the advancement of woman's work in the Church it will be matter of humble gratitude to God on the part of the writer. For this purpose it is presented to the public, and especially to those interested in the deaconess movement.

The author acknowledges his obligation to his lifelong friend, James Ponsford, Esq., of Arlington House, Cheddar, England; to William R. Murphy, Esq., Rev. A. Spaeth, D.D., and Rev. A. Cordes, Rector of the Mary J. Drexel Deaconess Home, Philadelphia, for valuable books.

We have, in the proper place, referred to the several authors from whom we have quoted, but have not given the full titles. The work of Dean Howson is entitled *Deaconesses; or, The Official Help of Women in Parochial Work and in Charitable Institutions*. London: Longman, Green, Longman, and Roberts, 1862. The work of J. M. Ludlow is entitled *Woman's Work in the Church*. Alexander Strahan, London and New York, 1866. *The Church Fathers* used is the edition published by the Christian Literature Company, New York.

The work is sent forth with the hope that the divine blessing may attend it and the cause it advocates.

THE AUTHOR.

# DEACONESSES, ANCIENT AND MODERN.



## CHAPTER I.

### PRELIMINARY.

#### PROPHETESSES OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

MAN and woman in their creation and by natural endowments are inseparably united. The bond can never be broken. They stood together in the purity of Eden, and together fell in the transgression, sharing its penalty in the loss of purity and paradise.

“They, hand in hand, with wandering steps and slow,  
Through Eden took their solitary way.”

Thus they entered upon their career of mutual sin and alienation from God. “Hand in hand” must they seek to regain the lost paradise, and side by side work out their physical and moral destiny. That this is what God intended, both nature and revelation plainly teach. To help humanity in its lapsed condition, God called and inspired some to make known his will. The endowments bestowed on his servants

of old have kindled high and holy aspirations in righteous souls of every generation, and the employment of men and women in the prophetic office in the earliest ages is, at least, an intimation of God's design in the subsequent and fuller development of his Church.

We may justly infer that agencies employed at one time would be employed at another when the ends to be accomplished are the same; and that spiritual endowments given in one age would be given in another when the work of God demanded them. That this has always been the faith of the Church is seen in the fact that the gracious gifts of the Holy Spirit have been invoked on those specially consecrated to religious work. In the ordination of a deaconess in the ancient Church the bishop prayed: "O Eternal God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Creator of man and of woman, who didst replenish with the Spirit Miriam and Deborah, and Anna, and Huldah, . . . do thou now also look down upon this thy servant, who is to be ordained to the office of a deaconess, and grant her thy Holy Spirit."\* Here is a recognition of the fact that in the old dispensation God endowed and filled with his Holy Spirit some holy women whom he called to do special work in his Church. In every age substantially the same needs have appeared, and the same agencies have been employed in modified forms, and endowments

\* *Apostolical Constitutions*, Book viii, c. xx.



of the same Spirit have been given. There is "one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and in you all." So it will be to the end.

Believing that it is God's design to employ women in every age for the spread of his truth, the comfort of his people, and the establishment of his kingdom, we seek for some illustrations under the old dispensation.

"The Lord giveth the word:

The women that publish the tidings are a great host."

Psa. lxxviii, 11. (R. V.)

We will consider briefly the female characters of the Old Testament who were identified with the work of God as leaders and teachers, under the name of prophetesses.

**MIRIAM.** Miriam is the first prophetess on record designated by that name, though it is not likely that she was the first woman through whom God spoke prophetically. In the rabbinical traditions there are seven prophetesses in Old Testament times: Sarah, Miriam, Deborah, Hannah, Abigail, Huldah, and Esther.\*

The following are the principal statements and allusions to Miriam and her work: "And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances. And Miriam answered

\* Stanley's *Jewish Church*, vol. i, p. 488.

them, Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea." Exod. xv, 20, 21.

"And Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses. . . . And they said, Hath the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses? hath he not spoken also by us? And the Lord heard it." Num. xii, 1, 2.

"O my people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me.

"For I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the house of servants; and I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam." Mic. vi, 3, 4.

It can hardly be said that before the exodus God had an organized people. At the earliest time that God gave to man his revealed will, and designated the system of worship that would be acceptable to him, he employed consecrated women in his service. Miriam was the sister of Moses and Aaron. According to Josephus, Miriam watched the fate of the infant set afloat on the Nile in the ark of bulrushes, came to the king's daughter when the child was rescued, and managed the stratagem for his preservation, calling the child's mother to be its nurse. After describing the rescue of the child from the river, by the servant who could swim, he says: "Now Miriam was by when this happened, not to appear to be there on purpose, but only as staying to see the child. . . . And, indeed, such providence was exer-

cised in the care of this child as showed the power of God." \*

Upon the passages quoted above (Exod. xv), Dr. A. Clarke says: "By this we find that God not only poured out his Spirit upon *men*, but upon women also. It is likely that Miriam was inspired by the Spirit of God to instruct the Hebrew women as Moses and Aaron were to instruct the men."

We see by Num. xii that she laid claim to the prophetic office and influence. The word of God by Micah shows that she was constituted joint leader of the people with her two brothers, Moses and Aaron. "Hence," says Clarke, "it is very likely that she was the instructress of the women, and regulated the times and places of their devotional acts; for it appears that from the beginning to the present day the Jewish women worshiped apart." Peculiar honor was conferred on this godly woman, "the third member, the eldest born of that noble family, whose name now first appears in the history of the Church, afterward to become so renowned through its Grecian and European form of *Maria* and *Mary*. She came forth, as was the wont of Hebrew women after some great victory, to meet the triumphant hosts, with her Egyptian timbrels, and with dances of her country-women—Miriam, who had watched her infant brother by the river-side, and now greeted him as the deliverer of her people, or rather, if we may with reverence

\* *Josephus*, Book ii, c. ix.

say so, greeted the divine Deliverer, by the new and awful Name, now first clearly proclaimed to her family and nation." \*

"Sing unto JEHOVAH, for he is lifted up on high, on high.  
The horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.  
My strength and song is JAH, and he is become my salvation.  
He is my GOD, and I will praise him · my father's God, and I will exalt him."

One writer, listening to the voices of past centuries, says: "Hark! The hum of mighty hosts! It rose and fell, fainter and more faint; then the murmur of water was heard and lost again, as it swelled and gathered and burst in one grand volume of sound like a halleluiah from myriad lips. Out of the resounding echo, out of the dying cadence, a single female voice arose. Clear, pure, rich, it soared above the tumult of the host that hushed itself, a living thing. Higher, sweeter, it seemed to break the fetters of mortality and tremble in sublime adoration before the Infinite. My breath stilled with awe. Was it a spirit voice—one of the glittering host in the jasper city 'that had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it?' And the water—was it the river, clear as crystal, flowing from the great white throne? But no! The tone now floated out soft, sad, human. There was no sorrowful strain in that nightless land where the leaves of the trees were for the healing of the nations. The beautiful voice was of earth, and sin-stricken. From

\* Stanley's *Jewish Church*, vol. i, p. 46.

the sobbing that mingled with the faint ripple of water it went up inspired with praise to the sky, and—hark! the Hebrew tongue:

“‘The horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.’

“Then the noise of the multitude swelled again, and a clash of music broke forth from innumerable timbrels. I raised my head quickly—it was the song of Miriam after the passage of the Red Sea.”\*

It is evident that Miriam moved in a higher sphere than was allotted to ordinary Israelitish women, and served God in his public worship, leading and directing vast hosts of worshipers in a system of worship that was peculiarly spectacular and demonstrative. If tradition or the historian Josephus be correct, she was married and became a mother and grandmother; and yet the relation of wife and mother did not debar her from the office of instructress and prophetess. We know she was a chosen and inspired leader, and yet not so lifted above the experience and life of common humanity that she could not err. She grievously sinned in that she rebelled against Moses, and was severely punished by God amid the silent grief of her nation, but was forgiven, healed, and at length died in the favor of God on the borders of Canaan.

DEBORAH. This remarkable woman is introduced to us in the following manner: “And Deborah, a

\* F. McLandburgh.

prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, she judged Israel at that time. And she dwelt under the palm-tree of Deborah, between Ramah and Bethel, in Mount Ephraim: and the children of Israel came up to her for judgment.”—Judg. iv, 4, 5.

In the days of Deborah the Israelites were oppressed by surrounding nations, and all the chiefs of the tribes had lost heart, and despondency filled the land. How often under like circumstances has God raised up some special instrument to bring relief to the oppressed! It was so in the political history of the Jewish people, and has been so in the history of the Church. In the darkest hour the deliverer comes.

In the early days of the nation, in the time of the theocracy, prophetic endowment, spiritual power, and political rule were sometimes united in the same person. The Spirit of God descended upon Deborah, and she was the instrument of conveying to her people the divine will in things sacred and civil.

“Deborah’s title of prophetess includes the notion of inspired poetry, and in this sense the glorious triumphal ode well vindicates her claim to the office. This song, which was composed in consequence of the great victory over Sisera, is said to have been sung by Deborah and Barak. It is usually regarded as the composition of Deborah, and was probably indited by her to be sung on the return of Barak and his warriors from the pursuit. It belongs indisputably to

the first rank of Hebrew poetry, and is one of its most splendid and difficult specimens." \*

In the ecstasy and energy of inspiration the prophetess pours out her whole soul in thanksgiving to God for his divine aid, and in gratitude to the people of Israel for their patriotism in rising spontaneously to throw off the yoke of oppression. "Her strains are bold, varied, and sublime; she is every-where full of abrupt and impassioned appeals and personifications; she bursts away from earth to heaven and again returns to human things; she touches now upon the present, now dwells upon the past, and closes at length with the grand promise and result of all prophecy, and of all the dealings of God's providence, that the wicked shall be overthrown, while the righteous shall ever triumph in Jehovah's name." †

In this instance, in one of the darkest periods of Jewish history, God chose a woman as the organ of communication with his people. By the purity and influence of her character she was the head of the nation. By her intercourse with God, by her patriotic zeal, her unswerving faith, and her hope in the future of her nation, she became, indeed, "a mother in Israel." She was "the wife of Lapidoth." As God designed the great majority of women for wifeness and motherhood, it is not surprising that he makes no distinction between the married and unmarried in his calls to labor. God, whose wisdom is infinite, chooses

\* McClintock and Strong, art. "Deborah."

† *Ibid.*

instruments adapted to his work, independent of the mere accidents of life. Purity of character, consecration to his service, a desire to do his will, a single eye to his glory, a waiting for God's call, a readiness to be sent—these are the characteristics that secure the honor of some special service in the cause of God and man.

HANNAH. The biblical account of Hannah is given in 1 Sam. i and ii. The simple and natural story has excited the interest and won the favor of the good in all ages, and her beautiful prophetic song has found an echo in many hearts.

“The LORD maketh poor, and maketh rich :  
 He bringeth low, he also lifteth up.  
 He raiseth up the poor out of the dust,  
 He lifteth up the needy from the dunghill,  
 And maketh them to sit with princes,  
 And inherit the throne of glory :  
 For the pillars of the earth are the LORD'S,  
 And he hath set the world upon them. . . .  
 The Lord shall judge the ends of the earth ;  
 And he shall give strength unto his king,  
 And exalt the horn of his anointed.” (R. V.)

“The *Magnificat* of Hannah is an evangelical song chanted by the spirit of prophecy under the Levitical law. It is a prelude and overture to the Gospel. It is a connecting link of sweet and sacred melody between the *Magnificat* of Miriam after the passage of the Red Sea—symbolizing the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ—and the *Magnificat* of Mary, the annunciation of his birth. It is not only a song of



thanksgiving, it is also a prophecy. It is the utterance of the Holy Ghost moving within her, and making her maternal joy on the birth of Samuel to overflow in outpourings of thankfulness to God for those greater blessings in CHRIST, of which that birth was an earnest and pledge." \*

Not much is said of Hannah in the sacred writings, but enough to show the beauty of her character and her exalted piety. She loved God and his worship, consecrated her first-born to the service of the sanctuary, and under the inspiration of God gave utterance to the beautiful prophetic song in which she foretold the overthrow of the enemies of her people and the coming of the Messiah.

Peculiar honor was conferred on Hannah, in that she was the first to describe the Saviour of the world as a KING before there was a king in Israel, and "she first applied to him the remarkable epithet, Messiah in Hebrew, Christ in Greek, and Anointed in English," † which was adopted by nearly all the inspired writers that succeeded her in both the Old and New Testaments.

Thus wonderfully does God honor woman by placing her among the prophets; and in this is Hannah distinguished above all, in that she unfolds the leading title by which the Son of God should be known in all the world and in all ages. "Moreover, he who is suitably interested in these things, . . . does he not

\* Wordsworth.

† Dr. Hales, quoted by Dr. Clarke.

apply his mind, and perceive, and acknowledge, that through this woman, whose very name, which is Hannah, means 'this grace'—the very Christian religion, the very city of God, whose King and Founder is Christ, in fine, the very grace of God, hath thus spoken by the prophetic spirit, whereby the proud are cut off so that they fall and the humble are filled so that they rise, which that hymn chiefly celebrates?" \*

HULDAH. Nothing is known of Huldah, the prophetess, but what is recorded in 2 Kings xxii. The prophecy she uttered is contained in verses fifteen to twenty inclusive. A very brief prophecy, but the circumstances that called it forth are remarkable and worthy of special notice. The people of Israel had departed from God during the reign of the wicked kings Manasseh and Amon; but the good Josiah inaugurated a reformation.

The high-priest Hilkiah found the Book of the Law in the house of the LORD. There was, however, such a dearth of religious knowledge that not one of all the king's servants, neither high-priest nor scribe, could give the meaning of the law to the king when he demanded it. Jeremiah was a prophet in Israel at that time, but he was not appealed to; perhaps he was at his home in Anathoth and could not be readily consulted, or else it was the purpose of God that Huldah should be consulted and her prophecy

\* Augustine, *City of God*, Book xvii, c. iv.

recorded, as this is the only circumstance by which her name is perpetuated in the Church, though it is likely she was a constant instructor of the people.

Aside from the office of prophetess she stood well in the nation. She was "the wife of Shallum the son of Tikvah, the son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe;" "which Shallum," says Josephus, "was a man of dignity, and of an eminent family." "We find from this, and we have many facts in all ages to corroborate it, that a pontiff, a pope, a bishop, or a priest may, in some cases, not possess the true knowledge of God; and that a simple woman, possessing the life of God in the soul, may have more knowledge of the divine testimonies than many of those whose office it is to explain and enforce them."\*

This is true, but it is evident that the knowledge possessed by Huldah was not of the ordinary kind, and though a woman she was one of those appointed of God to teach and enforce the divine law and to be a mouth-piece for God to his people. The note of Dr. Priestly is apt and to the point: "It pleased God to distinguish several women with the spirit of prophecy, as well as other great attainments, to show that in his sight, and especially in things of a spiritual nature, there is no essential pre-eminence in the male sex, though in some things the female is subject to the male."

"Women are the subjects of four distinct commands

\* Adam Clarke, D.D.

in the decalogue. The names of women occur in the genealogies; and in some cases they were entitled to hold property in the Land of Promise. Women were thus recognized in the Old Testament as members of society, as constituents of the body corporate, and as inspired and authorized transmitters of divine oracles." \*

The prophetesses are, relatively, few in number, and yet are sufficient to establish the truth given above by Dr. Priestly. In this sense God is not the respecter of persons. By holy men or by holy women God speaks or works as it may please him. There were prophets of old, no doubt, whose names and prophecies it did not please God to preserve. They served their generation, and their record is on high. This is true, also, of prophetesses. Enough has been presented to show that in Old Testament times God inspired women, as well as men, and sent them to make proclamation of his will: some from the rulers of the people, as Miriam; some from the wealthy and eminent, as Huldah; and some from the middle or lowly, as Hannah.

These women were not deaconesses. No, but they were office-bearers in the Church of God, and specially endowed by the Holy Ghost. And the early Church fathers who penned the prayer to be used at the ordination of a deaconess prayed that God would replenish with the Holy Spirit the consecrated dea-

\* Dr. Charteris, *Presbyterian Review*, 1888.

conesses as he did "Miriam, Deborah, Hannah, and Huldah."

Deaconesses are not inspired as were prophetesses, neither have deacons been inspired since the days of the apostles, but they may be "replenished with the Holy Spirit," and be prepared to discharge the work assigned them to the glory and praise of Jesus Christ our Lord. In this sense they have served God, the Church, and their generation as efficiently as the prophetesses of the old dispensation.

## CHAPTER II.

## THE WOMEN OF THE GOSPELS.

THE spirit of prophecy, which had so long ceased in Israel, began to appear again at the opening of the new dispensation. As at the beginning of the Mosaic it rested alike upon Moses and Miriam, so at the beginning of the Gospel dispensation it rested also on both Zacharias and Elisabeth.

ELISABETH belonged to a sacerdotal family. She "was of the daughters of Aaron," and her husband also was a priest. By the will of God she became the mother of John the Baptist. "The angel said, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John. And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth." Luke i, 13, 14. At a later period, before the birth of John, Elisabeth was "filled with the Holy Ghost." The spirit of prophecy was upon her, and gave her a clear understanding of the mystery of the birth of the promised Messiah. She blessed the Virgin Mary, and said, "Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" Luke i, 42.

MARY. The relation of the Virgin Mary to the Gospel dispensation and to the divine Saviour is exceptional. In every respect it seems so sacred that we cannot enter upon it, even in thought, without feeling that we "stand on holy ground." As mother of the Saviour of the world she holds a peculiar position. We may rightly attribute to her the most beautiful traits of womanly character, and revere her as the highest model of female purity, love, and piety. In her relation to the history of redemption, as the mother of Christ, she must forever stand alone. But in her relation to the Church, and her utterances of divine truth, we may place her with other holy women who have been instruments of the Holy Spirit.

Hannah, upon the occasion of the birth of Samuel, a future prophet and judge of Israel, sung in hallowed measure. And Mary, like the ancient prophetess, in the moment of inspired exaltation pours forth her joy in poetic utterances—a proof that the same Spirit, in different ages and persons, breathes the same holy strains. But the song of the latter is gentler, grander, opening into a far sublimer perspective. "And Mary said,

"My soul doth magnify the Lord,  
And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.  
For he hath looked upon the low estate of his handmaiden.  
For behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.  
For he that is mighty hath done to me great things;  
And holy is his name.  
And his mercy is unto generations and generations

Of them that fear him.

He hath showed strength with his arm;

He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their heart.

He hath put down princes from their thrones,

And hath exalted them of low degree.

The hungry he hath filled with good things;

And the rich he hath sent empty away.

He hath holpen Israel his servant,

That he might remember mercy

(As he spake unto our fathers)

Toward Abraham and his seed forever." Luke i, 46-55. (R. V.)

ANNA. The aged prophetess of St. Luke's gospel is introduced just as Simeon had taken the infant Christ in his arms and was uttering his departing triumphal song: "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation."

"And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phannuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of a great age, and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity; and she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day; and she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem."

This prophetess had attained to a great age and sanctity of character. She was blessed with the companionship of her husband but seven years, and ever after his death remained in widowhood. She was



one of those "widows indeed" commended of Paul to Timothy. Her giving "thanks likewise unto the Lord," when she saw the infant Jesus in the arms of the aged priest, was not the only instance of her prophesying, or the only reason why she was called a "prophetess." Her constant attendance at the temple service at the hours appointed for prayer, which were nine in the morning and three in the afternoon, and serving God in "prayers and fastings night and day," are proofs of her zeal and devotion. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will show them his covenant." "Such an appellation must have been caused by some earlier and frequent utterances, dictated by the spirit of prophecy, by reason of which she ranks among the list of holy women, who, both in earlier and later times, were chosen instruments of the Holy Ghost." \*

There were dwelling at Jerusalem at this time many pious families, who were living in immediate expectation of the coming Messiah. It had been made known to the aged Simeon that he should not die until "he had seen the Lord's Christ." Others could read and interpret the promises and prophecies and were "waiting for the consolation of Israel." The honor of bearing to these families the glad tidings that the Saviour had come was reserved for Anna. Was she not the *first* evangelist?

"And spake of him to all them that looked for

\* Lange, *in loco*.

redemption in Jerusalem. It is probable she went about from *house to house*, testifying the grace of God. In the margin of our common version, *Israel* is put instead of *Jerusalem*, which the translators thought was nearly as eligible as the word they received into the text. . . . Were this reading to be received, it would make a very essential alteration in the *meaning* of the text, as it would intimate that this excellent woman traveled *over the land of Israel*, proclaiming the advent of Christ. At all events, it appears that this widow was one of the *first* publishers of the Gospel of Christ; and it is likely that she *traveled* with it from house to house through the city of Jerusalem, where she knew they dwelt who were expecting the salvation of God.” \*

There were some, even in that fallen city and depraved age, whose hearts were right in the sight of God. They had waited long, but their faith was still alive and their love burning. Anna, perhaps more aged than Simeon, was chosen to bear the welcome news to them that Messiah had come. It well befitted her spotless character, her long residence in the temple, her deep devotion. She was standing on the verge of eternity; she must soon rise to serve God in the temple made without hands; let her go to tell those who, like herself, had hopefully waited his coming, that the Lord had “suddenly come to his temple.” She went forth as one who had glad

\* Adam Clarke, D.D., *in loco*.

news to tell. Her heart beat faster, and her aged limbs received new strength, her youth was renewed, and her eyes beamed with unearthly luster. Was she weary? We think not. The human frame will bear much under the impulse of a hallowed joy. As she went up and down the streets of the ancient city her feet touched the earth but lightly, because of the happiness of her soul, as she went from house to house and ceased not until she "spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem."

Elisabeth and Anna belonged to the old dispensation rather than the new. Their piety was of the Old Testament type; the center of their thought and worship was the temple. They lived on the threshold; the old was fading, the new was assuming definite form. In them the two dispensations were beautifully blended—the faith and hope inspired by the promises, and the joy of realization. Anna, having seen "the Lord's Christ," and proclaimed his advent to *all* those in Jerusalem who were "waiting the consolation of Israel," slept with her fathers. The Lord Jesus, emerged from the obscurity of Nazareth, proclaimed his mission, and laid the foundations of his kingdom. Prophets or prophetesses were no longer needed to foretell his coming or declare his advent. The prophetic office was embodied in himself. He was the one of whom Moses said, "A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear." When

his work was accomplished and he had ascended, the prophetic Spirit was again given and the sublime promise of the Father was fulfilled: "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy. . . . And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my Spirit." Joel ii, 28, 29.

There are "many other women" mentioned in the gospels, who stood in close relation to Christ and his work, whose affection and fidelity commended them as examples to all generations. It is not within our purpose to treat of them separately, as they were not called by the Holy Ghost, or designated by Christ, to any distinctive work. The number of women won to discipleship shows that from the first women were associated with Christ in helpful and blessed ministries. We will give them as grouped by the evangelists:

"And many women were there beholding afar off; which followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto him: among which was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's children." Matt. xxvii, 55, 56.

"Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary, the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene." John xix, 25.

"It was Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary *the mother* of James, and other women that were with

them, which told these things unto the apostles." Luke xxiv, 10.

There are a few facts brought to view in these Scripture statements instructive to us, to which we ask a moment's attention. The women mentioned by Matthew "followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto him." The object of their ministry was the Son of God, who in the hour of his sorrow needed and accepted the ministries of his faithful servants. They were *deaconesses* indeed. The idea involved in the Greek word is precisely that of helpful service. The derivation does not point, as is often thought, to laboring and slaving in the dust, but rather to the notion of alacrity and willing activity.\* The helpful work of these female disciples offered to the Son of God was not rejected by him. There were times in his life when woman's work and sympathy were more acceptable than those of man. When Christ was engaged in his public ministry in Galilee these women "ministered unto him of their substance," relieving his wants, lessening his sorrows, and adding to his joys.

They were in deep sympathy with his sufferings. John tells us they "stood by the cross of Jesus." It would seem that all the male disciples except John had fled, but not the women. Perhaps they were in less danger than the men from the excited multitude. Be this as it may, their fidelity was more conspicuous,

\* Howson, p. 15.

their compassion greater, and the agony of Christ drew with more powerful attraction the tender sympathies of woman. This is only an illustration of the law of our being. God made woman capable of the most tender sympathy, and the greatest help to all suffering human beings.

It is a striking and grateful fact that this need of help appeared in the Saviour of the world, and found in woman such willing helpfulness as could be extended in the hour of his death and in the burial of his sacred body. Attendant upon the ministry, sufferings, death, and burial of Christ the first *deaconesses* were found. Their tender ministries soothed his last sufferings, prepared his body for the tomb; theirs were the latest vigils on the evening of the crucifixion, and earliest on the morning of the resurrection. Mary was the first to see the resurrection body of the Lord, and "*woman*" was the first gracious resurrection word that fell from his sacred lips.

Does not this indicate a field for the energies and sympathies of woman? "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren ye have done it unto me." Matt. xxv, 40. Thus she serves the Lord in the lowliest of his brethren. Suffering is widespread, and its demands cannot be met as they should be but by the gentle hand of woman.

What an error the Church and the world have made in trying to restrict the energies of woman to her own home! "It would surely be a great mistake to limit

the divine law of woman's mission on the earth to the mere relation of marriage. The Scripture is far wider than our prejudices. Wherever helping work is to be done, there woman is in her place. Motherly and sisterly care are often most needed when they cannot be had within the sphere of domestic life. Home is indeed woman's highest and most natural sphere; but the outcasts of society cannot be reached by home influences unless those influences are brought to them, and it is only a female hand that can bring them. If the activity of the stronger sex is to penetrate all parts of human life, and yet feminine influence is to be restricted within families, the equilibrium of society is not preserved, but marred."\*

"They told these things unto the apostles." Thus these faithful women proclaimed the Gospel to the men who were afterward to be the teachers of the whole human race. What honor God hath bestowed on woman! She ministered to Christ of her substance. She stood by the cross and manifested her sympathy when scarcely a pitying eye gazed on him from all the multitude. And when he had risen from the dead, she was the first bearer of the glad tidings to his chosen apostles. Surely the honor conferred on woman by Christ at the opening of the gospel dispensation should not be denied her in the later development of it.

Does not this, therefore, point to another field for

\* Howson, p. 16.

the energy and zeal of female disciples? "The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few." The commission given by Christ to woman, "Go and tell my disciples;" "Be not afraid, go, tell my brethren," has never been taken from her by divine authority. God intended that she should help in the world's evangelization. That she should exercise a helpful ministry, teach the ignorant, nurse the sick, comfort the afflicted, drop the seed of divine truth into the wounds made by Sovereign Love, and tell the glad tidings of the Saviour's resurrection to a despondent Church and an unbelieving world.



## CHAPTER III.

## THE WOMEN OF THE ACTS.

JESUS CHRIST, after his resurrection, told his disciples "that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." Acts i, 4, 5. As many female disciples had manifested such striking fidelity and sympathy it would be expected that ready obedience to Christ's commands would characterize them. As Christ had conferred such great honor, and admitted them to such great privileges, we would expect they would be found waiting the fulfillment of the promise and would share in the baptism of the Holy Ghost.

Accordingly, we find them named with the apostles who were waiting with one accord the coming of the Comforter. "These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren." Acts i, 14. God designed that they should share in the perils and labors of the world's evangelization; they must therefore share in the preparatory baptism absolutely

essential to success. They were included in the promise of the Father as given by Joel: "I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy." Joel ii, 26. They were also included in the fulfillment of the promise, for God is faithful who has promised. "And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." Acts ii, 4.

The particular labors of these women who received the spiritual baptism are not given, neither are those of most of the apostles. It is in harmony with the spirit of the apostolic Church to suppose that employment was found for all the activities of both men and women who were specially endowed for work by the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Men and women shared in the suffering inflicted by persecution. "As for Saul, he made havoc of the Church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison. Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every-where preaching the word." Acts viii, 3, 4.

The storms of persecution are only winds that fan the fire of faith, and carry the spark of truth further to those beyond. The ashes of the martyrs is the seed of the Church.

"Flung to the heedless winds,  
Or on the waters cast,  
Their ashes shall be watched  
And gathered at the last;

And from that scattered dust,  
    Around us and abroad,  
Shall spring a plenteous seed  
    Of witnesses for God.

“ Jesus has now received  
    Their latest living breath ;  
Yet vain is Satan's boast  
    Of victory in their death ;  
Still, still, though dead, they speak,  
    And, trumpet-tongued, proclaim  
To many a wak'ning land  
    The one availing Name.”

The women mentioned in the above passage of Scripture shared in the faith and suffering ; did they not also share in the labor ? There is no rule of interpretation that would lead us to dissever these passages or to disconnect the suffering of the one from the preaching of the other. We do not claim that these Christians were invested with any ecclesiastical office. The Church was in its infancy. Christ had invested the apostles with divine authority, the Church had set apart for a special purpose the seven deacons, but even to these the ministry of the word had not been primarily intrusted. Church order and office came later. The deacons, some of them at least, preached ; all the scattered Church, men and women, preached because God was in them. “ They labored as evangelists, wherever they came, without any official obligation or any express authority. They were moved by the inward power of that faith which can-

not but speak of the truth of which the heart is full ; they were influenced by the Spirit, with whom they had been anointed ; they were controlled by their love of the Saviour, to whom they owed the remission of their sins and all their blessed hopes. This propagation of the Gospel beyond Jerusalem was not the work of the apostles themselves, but of other Christians who held no office but were invested with the general priesthood of believers. According to human conceptions of church government and the ecclesiastical office, such a course should not have been adopted. But the Lord of the Church did not restrict himself to the apostolic office which he had instituted, in such a manner that no work could be legitimate, acceptable to God, or rich in promise and in blessing, unless it were performed by the apostles. Here, too, Christ teaches us that no human being and no finite ordinance can be regarded as necessary and absolutely indispensable. He alone is at all times and in all places indispensable.”\* From among these laborers came the offices of deacons, evangelists, elders, and bishops, being called for by the success of the Church and the exigencies of the times. But we may safely infer from this that the voluntary unofficial work of the Church should not be superseded by those who hold ecclesiastical position.

DORCAS. This devout and charitable woman is mentioned in Acts ix, 36, and following verses. Little

\* Lange, *Com.*

is known of her, apart from her good deeds by which she endeared herself to all, especially those who were the recipients of her benefactions. She was a disciple of Christ, connected with the church in Joppa. Her circumstances, position in life, and family connections are not known, but some facts more important than these are recorded. She had heard and believed the doctrine of Christ, imbibed his spirit, and was identified with his people. She was a deaconess without the name. The testimony of her character is thus given: "This woman was full of good works and alms-deeds which she did." If we mistake not, this testimony is unique; it stands alone; and thus this pious woman is peculiarly honored of God. In how many spheres of usefulness her energies and means were employed we know not; but she was "full of good works and alms-deeds which she did." There was no room for more; her consecration and service were complete. Her means, talents, time, and energies were all employed for God. Thus early did the Church learn to feed the hungry and clothe the naked. In primitive times widows formed a distinct part of the Christian community. Dorcas specially cared for them. She worked for Christ when she made garments for the poor. She honored him by her acts of devotion and sacrifice. "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction and to keep himself unspotted from the world." James i, 27. Christ honored

her above many. She died, and by the power of Christ Peter raised her from the dead, "and when he had called the saints and widows he presented her alive." Acts ix, 41. This was a great confirmation of the Gospel. No doubt her remaining days were spent in zealous labors for God and the Church. "Thus was a richer treasure laid up for her in heaven, and she afterward returned to a more exceeding weight of glory than that from which so astonishing a providence had recalled her for a season."\*

Through all the ages Dorcas is honored in the Church for her good works, and her name is perpetuated in those societies which have been organized to clothe the poor and naked. Her name is as ointment poured forth, and her example furnishes an undying impulse to works of charity.

THE DAUGHTERS OF PHILIP. "And the same man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy." Acts xxi, 9. These women were not devoted to a life of celibacy by special vows. It is very probable that they were young, as the great activity of their father Philip, the deacon and evangelist, would preclude the idea of his being of advanced age. "Their virginity is probably referred to only as a reason for their being still at home, and not as having any necessary connection with their inspiration." † Their inspiration and work was the still visible fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel: "Your sons and your

\* Joseph Benson, D.D.

† Alexander, *in loco*.

daughters shall prophesy." This was twenty years after the Pentecostal baptism, and could not be attributed to any momentary enthusiasm enkindled by that event. But the fact that four daughters in one family were devoted to the cause of Christ, and specially endowed with the gift of prophecy—inspired of God to speak to the edification of the people—attests the high spiritual life of the Church and the position that women held in the working force of apostolic Christianity. "Probably these were no more than teachers in the Church; for we have already seen that this is a frequent meaning of the word prophecy, and this is undoubtedly one thing intended by the prophecy of Joel. If Philip's daughters might be *prophetesses*, why not *teachers*?"\* "That predictive powers did occasionally exist in the New Testament prophets is proved by the case of Agabus, Acts xi, 28, but this was not their characteristic. The prophets of the New Testament were supernaturally illuminated expounders and preachers."† If this is true of the prophets, it is also true of the *prophetesses*.

"The home of the evangelist Philip, whose office as a deacon expired after the persecution (Acts viii), became, in consequence of the fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel, the honored central point of the Christian congregation of Cesarea. His four daughters, who had received the gift of prophecy and of

\* Adam Clarke, D.D., *in loco*.

† Smith's *Dict.*

interpretation, and who, as pure virgins, represent the chastity of the daughters of Zion, furnish new and clear evidence that all believers alike enjoy the privileges of children; and even the earlier instances of the prophetesses Miriam, Deborah, etc., prove that there is no difference in the kingdom of grace between male and female." \* "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." Gal. iii, 28.

The four daughters of Philip are the only women specially named as prophesying in the New Testament, but there is no reason to suppose that these are the only women so honored. The function of "prophet" in the New Testament and early Church was a distinguished one, and is now only beginning to be understood. Important as it is, it is one which St. Peter's speech (Acts ii) and the narrative (Acts xxi) compel us to acknowledge was exercised by women. This fact assumes great importance, read in connection with Paul's words: "And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone." These were New Testament prophets. "No words can add to the solemnity of the truth thus conveyed. Eph. ii, 20. In so far as regards the extraordinary endowments of the Spirit women are found to be admitted to the rank next to that of the apostles." †

\* Lange, *in loco*.

† Dr. Charteris, *Presb. Review*, 1888.



These prophetesses were perpetuated beyond the apostolic age. Eusebius, quoting from an earlier author, who places in contrast the false prophets and prophetesses carried away by the Montanist heresy, says: "After stating other matters, he enumerates those who had prophesied under the New Testament. Among these he mentions one Ammias and Quadratus. 'But the false prophet,' says he, 'is carried away by a vehement ecstasy, accompanied by want of all shame and fear. Beginning, indeed, with a designed ignorance, and terminating, as before said, in involuntary madness. They will never be able to show that any of the Old or any of the New Testament were thus violently agitated and carried away in spirit, neither will they be able to boast that Agabus, or Judas, or Silas, or the daughters of Philip, or Ammias, in Philadelphia, . . . ever acted in this way.'"\* Here prophesying is distinguished from that peculiar frenzy so often found in those who falsely assume the prophetic office. This Philadelphia prophetess must have lived at the end of the second century.

\* Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, Book v, c. xvii.

## CHAPTER IV.

## THE WOMEN OF THE EPISTLES.

It is probable that the churches of apostolic times were all, in the main, constituted alike. There were Jews and Greeks, bond and free, male and female, with variations as to numbers, wealth, and social position, according to circumstances and places. We can easily trace these facts in the epistles of St. Paul. His allusion to his fellow-helpers and fellow-sufferers in the cause of Christ; his reflections upon the defection of some, and his salutations to the faithful and beloved, reveal to us, at least in part, the elements that constituted the churches to which he wrote. We may therefore conclude that, finding female workers and officers in one church, they also existed in others, even though they may not be specifically named.

The sixteenth chapter of Paul's Epistle to the Romans is rich in allusions to the pious and devoted women that came within the circle of his acquaintance and labors.

“I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea: that ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she

hath need of you: for she hath been a succorer of many, and of myself also." Rom. xvi, 1, 2.

It will comport better with our plan to consider the character and office of Phebe in a later chapter. We shall therefore proceed to the other names here mentioned, and speak of their labors and position in the Church. Finding other women also named who were helpers of the apostle in his labors and sufferings, but who did not occupy any official position, as Phebe did, we may remark that, whatever the functions of deaconesses were, in the ministrations of charity, or in the arrangement of public worship, they had nothing in them that would exclude the full activities of other female disciples to whom no title was applied.

Immediately after his commendation of Phebe Paul says: "Greet Mary, who bestowed much labor on us." Rom. xvi, 6. "Salute Tryphena and Tryphosa, who labor in the Lord." "Salute the beloved Persis, which labored much in the Lord." And in another epistle Paul speaks again of "those women which labored with me in the Gospel." Phil. iv, 3. These commendations and salutations are indicative of great activity in the Church on the part of these female disciples. Such phrases as "bestowed much labor on us," "who labor in the Lord," "which labored much in the Lord," would not be used of any ordinary church members, or in reference to those who did only ordinary church work. They certainly show

that these pious females consecrated time and talents to God. Their work or position in the Church seemed not to depend on or to be governed by their social relations. Some of them were married, and yet in connection with the marriage tie husband and wife in sweetest harmony were eminent and efficient helpers in the work of the Lord.

“Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my helpers in Christ Jesus.” Rom. xvi, 3. Others, no doubt, were single, and some were probably widows. The social relation seemed not to be a barrier. Consecration to God is the all-important thing, and where this is perfect the energies of body and soul will find an outflow toward God and his cause.

“Salute Tryphena and Tryphosa, who labor much in the Lord.” Rom. xvi, 12. These names are mentioned in such a way “as to convey the impression of stated systematic work.”\* They were holy women, who were assistants to the apostle in his work, probably by exhorting, visiting the sick, etc.

Persis also, it seems, excelled the preceding; for of her it is said “she labored much in the Lord.” “We learn from this that Christian women, as well as men, labored in the ministry of the word. In those times of simplicity all persons, whether men or women, who had received the truth believed it to be their duty to propagate it to the uttermost of their power. Many have spent much useless labor

\* Howson, p. 53.

endeavoring to prove that these women did not *preach*. That there were some prophetesses as well as prophets in the Christian Church we learn; and that a woman might pray or prophesy, provided she had her head covered, we know; and that whoever prophesied spoke unto others to edification, exhortation, and comfort St. Paul declares, 1 Cor. xiv, 3. And that no preacher can do more every person must acknowledge, because to edify, exhort, and comfort are the prime ends of the Gospel ministry. If *women* thus *prophesied*, then *women preached*. There is, however, much more than this implied in the Christian ministry, of which men only, and men called of God, are capable." \*

With this comment we entirely agree, excepting only the last sentence. The Scriptures clearly show that women bore a part in the ministry of the word. This is not opinion, or inference, but direct statement. What there is in the Christian ministry of which men only are capable Dr. Clarke does not tell us, and we do not know.

Thus in the epistles of Paul "we find continued that bright chain of female excellence, beginning with those holy women who, with the apostles, followed the Saviour in all his journeyings, and ministered to him of their substance; the Marys, and Joannas, and Susannas (Luke viii, 2, 3), and which then links itself on to the above mentioned names through

\* Adam Clarke, D.D., *in loco*.

Dorcas, full of good works and alms-deeds (Acts ix, 36); and, above all, through that remarkable personage of the apostolic age, Priscilla, the wife of Aquila, the Jew of Pontus, whom the Acts shows us with him, expounding the way of God more perfectly to Apollos (Acts xviii, 26); the husband and wife both helpers of Paul in Christ Jesus, who had for his life laid down their necks; unto whom not only he gave thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles. Rom. xvi, 3, 4. The female diaconate must, therefore, have been, from the first, like every other office in the Christian Church, only the full developed type, and not the exceptional monopoly of a woman's function and work." \*

\* Ludlow, *Woman's Work*, p. 7.

## CHAPTER V.

## DEACONESSES OF THE APOSTOLIC CHURCH.

IT has long been known to scholars who have given attention to the Holy Scriptures and Church history, that the office of deaconess belonged to the Church in apostolic and primitive times. Because of defection from the simplicity and purity of those times it soon passed out of use, or was merged into those unnatural monastic organizations so prevalent in mediæval days. And such have been the customs and prejudices for centuries past against a principal or public sphere for woman that her true position has been denied her, to the great loss of the Church and the hinderance of the work of God.

We will examine those passages in the apostolic writings on which the claim for a female diaconate is based.

“I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea.” Rom. xvi, 1. The Greek word (*διάκονον*) which the translators of the English version here rendered “servant” was rendered “deacon,” in Phil. i, 1; 1 Tim. iii, 2, 8, and in other portions of the apostolic writings. If the same translation had been followed here as in the

above, the passage would have read, "I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a *deacon* of the church which is at Cenchrea." In that case, the name, at least, of the female diaconate would have been familiar to us now.

Variations in the translation of the same original Greek words have led to confusion of ideas in the minds of the readers of the English version, and long usage has created strong prejudices against any change.

As to the official position which Phebe occupied in the church at Cenchrea we condense the following points from McClintock and Strong: "What is said of her (Phebe) is worthy of especial notice, because of its bearing on the question of the deaconesses of the apostolic Church. On this point we have to observe (1.) that the term (*διάκονος*) here applied to her, though not in itself necessarily an official term, is the term which would be applied to her if it were meant to be official; (2.) that this term is applied in the *Apostolical Constitutions* to women who ministered officially, the deaconess being called *ἡ διάκονος* as the deacon is called *ὁ διάκονος*; (3.) that it is now generally admitted that in 1 Tim. iii, 11, Paul applies it so himself; (4.) that in the passage before us Phebe is called the *διάκονος* of a particular church, which seems to imply a specific employment; (5.) that the church at Cenchrea to which she belonged could only have been a small church; whence we may



draw a fair conclusion as to what was customary in the matter of such female ministrations in the larger churches; (6.) that, whatever her errand in Rome might be, the independent manner of her going there seems to imply (especially when we consider the secluded habits of Greek women) not only that she was a widow, or a woman of mature age, but that she was acting officially; (7.) that she had already been of great service to Paul and others, either by her wealth or her energy, or both; a statement which closely corresponds with the description of the qualifications of the enrolled widows in 1 Tim. v, 10; (8.) that the duty which we here see Phebe discharging implies a personal character worthy of confidence and respect." \*

The word *διάκονος* is inclusive of both sexes. It is very generally conceded that in Rom. xvi, 1, it is applied to Phebe in its technical sense as denoting an office, though Conybeare says it cannot be "confidently asserted, especially as the word *διάκονος* is so constantly used in its non-technical sense of one who ministers in any way to others." † Some are of the opinion that the female deacon is more frequently mentioned in Scripture than the male deacon by the official title: "We observe that when any of the seven are referred to it is never by the title of deacon; thus Philip is called 'the evangelist.' (Acts xxi, 8)." ‡ "It

\* McClintock and Strong's *Ency.*, art. "Phœbe."

† *Life of Paul*, vol. i, p. 435.

‡ *Ibid.*

is worth remarking that Phebe is called a deaconess, but that Stephen is never called a deacon. And further, if Phil. i, 1, does include deacons of both kinds the 'woman-deacon' is actually mentioned oftener in Scripture by the official title than the 'man-deacon.' " \*

If the term *διάκονος* is here applied to Phebe to designate an office, then she has the distinguished honor of being the first in the order of time to whom it was thus applied; the Epistle to the Romans, in which it is applied to Phebe, being assigned to A. D. 58, while the Epistle to the Philippians, in which it is applied to deacons of both kinds, probably, is assigned to A. D. 62.

Of the social position and character of Phebe, Conybeare says: "She was a widow of consideration and wealth who acted as one of the deaconesses of the Church, and was now about to sail to Rome upon some private business, apparently connected with a law-suit in which she was engaged." † Phebe was a woman of importance and social standing. She did not occupy any menial position in the church at Cenchrea, was no mere "door-keeper or cleaner of the place of worship," as Dr. W. L. Alexander maintains, but held a more honorable position, and discharged both secular and spiritual functions.

She had "business" at the capital of the empire, and such a journey meant considerable expense. She

\* Howson, p. 58.

† *Life of Paul*, vol. ii, p. 154.

had been a succorer of many, and this is to be understood in the sense of patronage and protection ; service performed by a superior to an inferior. At Cenchrea she was a deaconess of the Church, and Paul guarantees the genuineness of her faith when he calls her "our sister." She had stood by him in some hour of need, and, perhaps, had entertained and sheltered him under her own hospitable roof at the time when he made a vow at Cenchrea and seemed to have had a great deliverance, and had used her influence and wealth for the advancement of the cause of Christ.

Paul's commendation is strong and beautiful : "That ye receive her in the Lord as becometh saints ; and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you : for she hath been a succorer of many, and of myself also." She is here commended for her energy, liberality, and fidelity. Surely she was a worthy office-bearer in the Church of God.

In speaking of the women of the epistles we purposely omitted the name of Priscilla, giving only Paul's greeting, thinking that a more appropriate place for her would be with Phebe, the deaconess ; as many eminent scholars believe that she held that position, and even if she did not bear the name she evidently performed the functions of that office. Her connection with Paul and the Church continued through many years. She is first named in Acts xviii, 1, 18. Paul, having come from Athens to Corinth,

found a temporary residence with Aquila and Priscilla on account of oneness of faith or occupation, as they were all "tent-makers."

Again, in Acts xviii, 24, 29, she is named as residing in Ephesus. Here she found Apollos, "an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures," who "taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John, . . . whom, when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto *them* and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly."

We need not wonder at the superior knowledge of Priscilla and Aquila. For eighteen months they heard Paul in Corinth; night and day they labored, prayed, searched the Scriptures, and taught together, in the synagogue, in the workshop, and in the house. They were well-instructed Christians, having been taught by the Holy Ghost, and by Paul. Perhaps Apollos knew nothing of the doctrine of atonement, the resurrection of Christ, or the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost. "They took him unto them," to their home, not publicly disputing in the synagogue. They showed him kindness, treated him with consideration, and then "instructed him." Here was woman's tact and kindness. "Love me and then say what thou wilt." "This eloquent man, and mighty in the Scriptures, who was even a public teacher, was not ashamed to be indebted to the instructions of a Christian *woman*, in matters that not only concerned his own salvation, but also the work of the ministry, in

which he was engaged. It is disgraceful to a man to be ignorant when he may acquire wisdom; but it is no disgrace to acquire wisdom from the meanest person or thing. The adage is good: Despise not advice, even of the meanest; the gagging of geese preserved the Roman State." \*

The above quotation is somewhat curious, and the inference drawn as to the humility of Apollos is striking. Perhaps it would have been more pertinent in the first century of the Christian era, considering the seclusion of both Jewish and Grecian women; but aversion to instruction from women in the Christian Church did not exist in apostolic times, as it did later, and evidently it lingered in the early part of the nineteenth century, as Dr. Clarke seemed to regard it as a great virtue for Apollos to submit to be instructed by Priscilla. Yea, it lingers now! But surely the clouds are being lifted from the intellect of woman, and the fetters are being taken from her, when one hundred and sixty thousand women are employed as *teachers* in the United States alone (1889).

In Priscilla, we have an illustration of what the married woman can, in connection with home duties, do in the general service of the Church. Such female ministrations were of great importance in the state of society in whose midst the early Christian communities were formed. The remarks of Archdeacon Evans on the position of Timothy at Ephesus are very just:

\* Adam Clarke, D.D., *in loco*.

“In his dealings with the female part of his flock, which in that time and country required peculiar delicacy and discretion, the counsel of the experienced Priscilla would be invaluable. Where, for instance, could he obtain more prudent and faithful advice than hers in the selection of widows to be placed upon the eleemosynary list of the Church, and of deaconesses for the ministry?”

Eternity alone will reveal the good accomplished by this godly couple. They are identified with Paul in the stormiest period of his life. They had “a church in their house,” and while Paul preached daily in the synagogue, market, or in “the school of Tyrannus,” Priscilla gave private instruction, and taught the new converts “the way of God more perfectly.”

From Rom. xvi, 3, 4, we learn that they had again returned to Rome, and Paul sends them his Christian greetings: “Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my helpers in Christ Jesus: who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles.” In Rome also they had gathered “a church in their house,” an indication of labor and zeal. This salutation is one of the warmest outbursts of affection found in the epistles of Paul. They had at some time endangered their lives to save his, and this act of heroism was a matter of thanksgiving on the part of all the Gentile churches.

Eight or ten years later we again get a glimpse of

this devoted husband and wife. Paul is now at Rome under condemnation of death, "ready to be offered," and the time of his departure at hand. He writes to his "dearly beloved son," Timothy, a farewell letter, and sends his final salutations to "Priscilla and Aquila." "There they disappear. Probably they survived Paul, growing older and older, let us hope, side by side, and in their deaths not long divided. They saw him face to face no more. But we imagine them visiting together the scene of the apostle's execution and his humble grave; and we see them living to tell a succeeding generation of that feeble bodily presence and the mighty soul within it, of that stammering speech which, nevertheless, penetrated men's minds by its directness and melted their hearts by its fire."\*

The names already quoted from the writings of Paul will suffice to show that the employment of women in the public and private work of the Church was quite common in apostolic times, and that some of them, at least, have official designations. It is evident also that they did their work well and met wisely and heroically the claims the Church had on them, meriting and receiving high apostolic commendations.

There are some passages in the pastoral epistles that are supposed by many of the best scholars to have some bearing upon the subject of apostolic deaconesses. In the first epistle to Timothy the apostle tells what

\* *Minor Characters*, p. 83.

a Christian bishop and deacon should be. He says : " A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behavior, given to hospitality, apt to teach ; not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre ; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous ; one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity." Then, speaking of the deacons, he says : " Likewise must the deacons be grave, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre. . . . Even so must their wives (*γυναικας*) be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things. Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well." 1 Tim. iii, 2-12.

It will seem strange, even to the ordinary reader, that while special injunctions are given to the *deacons'* wives there is none given to the wives of bishops. It has been observed by some that, " whereas if the example of a deacon's wife be of sufficient moment to deserve a special apostolic exhortation, that of a bishop's wife must need it far more."\* Therefore some have referred " their wives " to the bishops as well as the deacons. This view is not considered tenable by the best scholarship. " Two meanings only appear to have been put upon this passage till the Reformation : one which referred it to women generally, the other which referred it to the female diaconate."† Against the first view there are strong objections. Chrysostom

\* Ludlow, p. 4.

† *Ibid.*



says: "Some say that this is spoken of women generally; but it is not so. For why should he have thrown in something about women amongst the things which he had been saying? But he speaks of those who have the dignity of the diaconate." On this Dr. Adam Clarke observes: "Whatever is spoken here becomes women in general, but if the apostle had those termed deaconesses in his eye, which is quite possible, the words are peculiarly suitable to them. . . . Possibly, therefore, the apostle may have had this *order of deaconesses* in view, to whom it was as necessary to give counsels and cautions as to the deacons themselves; and to prescribe their qualifications, lest improper persons should insinuate themselves into that office."\* That these instructions were given in regard to the *women deacons* can be supported by the best scholarship in the English tongue. Bishop Ellicott, Dean Alford, and Dr. Wordsworth, whom Dean Howson says are "the three best modern English commentators on the pastoral epistles," take this view. Howson himself says: "We hold it almost certain that a candid and thoughtful student, looking carefully over the whole ground, and taking in his hand the light obtained from the facts of the early Church, will come to the conclusion that a *female diaconate* is here implied—an order of deaconesses working co-ordinately with the deacons, though, of course, less prominently and publicly."† He also says "that the setting apart

\* Adam Clarke, D.D., *in loco*.

† Howson, p. 58.

of women as deaconesses, so far as the Bible is concerned, rests on the same kind of foundation as the observance of Sabbath on Sunday or the practice of infant baptism." \*

It seems to have been the order of God that men and women should work side by side in advancing the interests of his kingdom and in bringing the blessed ministries of the Gospel of Christ to the hearts and homes of men. "Deaconesses working coordinately with the deacons." None can tell how much good the world has lost, or how much evil it has suffered, by the infringement of the order of God in setting aside this arrangement, founded in reason and demanded by the nature and condition of mankind.

In every age and under all conditions the Gospel of Christ creates benevolent impulses in the human heart. Christian women have ever felt them, and if allowed would have given them outward form consonant with the will of God and the wants of the times; but men thought they must be restricted and curbed, and so laid out certain channels in which they should run, and the result shows that men lacked wisdom and grace to guide them.

\* Howson, p. 58.

## CHAPTER VI.

## DEACONESSES OF THE EARLY CHURCH.

WE now leave the Church directed and presided over by the apostles, and look at it as it existed in the ages immediately succeeding them. All change in the working and organization of the Church was gradual. It must have been much the same for many years after the death of John as it was in the times of Paul. Changes would occur as civilization changed and as the exigency of the times required.

We have seen that the primitive diaconate consisted of two co-ordinate branches, male and female. It is, indeed, a question whether there was not a greater call for the labors of the deaconess than for those of the deacon, because of the peculiar customs of the people and age in which Christianity had its origin. So that, as Neander says, "this service of women had a special ground in the circumstances of the times." Females among the Jews, Greeks, and Romans lived in greater seclusion than is customary in Europe or America. The spread of the Gospel of Christ would have been long delayed without this female agency. The customs of the East have not changed much even to our own time. The great want of our missions in

Oriental countries to-day is more consecrated females, who can gain access to the homes of Mohammedan and Hindoo women. Men can never go where they are, and they cannot and will not come to hear the Gospel from the lips of men, and without woman the Orient will be covered with a pall of night for ages to come. For this reason they were employed in the early Church. The apostles, acting under divine authority, adapted the means to the end sought and to the exigency of the times. More ecclesiastical flexibility is what has been needed in all the ages since. "Thus we find the deaconess a conspicuous figure in the early Church, side by side with the deacon. And it is by this parallelism that we shall probably apprehend her position most correctly." \*

The deacon of the earliest Christian times was not such as is now found in the modern Church. In Presbyterian and Congregational Churches the deacon is an officer who assists the minister in various duties, but does not preach. In the Church of England, the Protestant Episcopal, and the Methodist Episcopal Churches a deacon is an officer who is authorized to administer baptism, to perform the marriage ceremony, and to assist the elder in the administration of the Lord's Supper, but who is not authorized to consecrate the elements. His duties are thus specified in the ordination service: "It appertaineth to the office of a deacon to assist the elder in divine service. And

\* Howson, p. 34.

especially when he administers the holy communion to help him in the distribution thereof, and to read and expound the holy Scriptures; to instruct the youth and to baptize. And, furthermore, it is his office to search for the sick, poor, and impotent, that they may be visited and relieved." The office in the Episcopal Churches is probably more ministerial than it was at first. There was a greater difference between the deacon and the presbyter in the first ages than now. The specific duties of visiting and relieving the poor are not performed by the deacon more than by the presbyter. As a rule, the deacon is a young minister, in the first or second year of his ordination, who expects at the end of the term to be ordained a presbyter or elder in the Church of God. "The primitive deacons were half laymen, and such was the position of the primitive deaconesses."\* At a later period the deacons assumed greater prerogatives and manifested great ambition, which called forth the condemnation of the councils of the Church.

It is a disputed point whether the diaconate arose from the appointment of the "seven," as narrated in the sixth chapter of Acts, or whether it did not arise earlier even than that. Mosheim says: "The Church was undoubtedly provided from the beginning with inferior ministers or *deacons*. No society can be without its servants, and still less such societies as those of the first Christians were. And it appears not only

\* Howson, p. 34.

probable, but evident, that the *young men* who carried away the dead bodies of Ananias and Sapphira were the subordinate ministers, or deacons, of the church at Jerusalem, who attended the apostles to execute their orders." \*

As to the particular time when this office originated in the apostolic Church, it matters not; it was instituted under the immediate direction of the apostles themselves. We adopt the following conclusion: "Whatever view may be taken of Acts vi, it appears clear that the later Church office (Phil. i; 1 Tim. iii) developed itself from the office designated in Acts vi, and may be traced back to it. The functions of the deacon were primarily secular, but soon rose into spiritual importance. Hence the moral qualifications described (1 Tim. iii) as necessary for the office of deacon are substantially the same as those of the bishop." † The organization of each Church, as Christianity spread, was much the same. "All the Christian Churches followed the example of that at Jerusalem, in whatever related to the choice and office of the deacons. Some, particularly the Eastern Churches, elected *deaconesses*, and chose for that purpose matrons or widows of eminent sanctity, who also ministered to the necessities of the poor, and performed several other offices that tended to the maintenance of order and decency in the Church." ‡ Widows

\* *Eccl. Hist.*, vol. i, p. 102.

† McClintock and Strong.

‡ Mosheim, *Hist.*, vol. i, p. 102.

were not always chosen, either in the apostolic or post-apostolic Churches, for the office of deaconess. "They seem to have been divided into two classes, not very precisely distinguished from one another; one class of older women, one of younger."\* Widows were preferred, and especially widows who had been mothers and educators of children. For this Tertullian gives the following reason: "In order, forsooth, that their experimental training in all the affections may, on the one hand, have rendered them capable of readily aiding all others with counsel and comfort, and that, on the other, they may none the less have traveled down the whole course of probation whereby a *female* may be tested."†

The deacons and deaconesses were *chosen* or *elected* by the main body of the membership, and this course of procedure has the apostolic sanction. "Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost, and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business." The seven were thus chosen, "whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them." Acts vi, 3-6. The deacons were chosen by the brethren and ordained by prayer and the imposition of hands by the apostles. We have no reason to suppose but that deacons and deaconesses were chosen and set apart for their work in the same way. In the early Church all officers were thus promoted by the

5 \* Howson, p. 34.

† Tert., *Veil. Vir.*, c. ix.

concurrent acts of the membership and clergy, "which was according to the example of the apostles and apostolic preachers, who in the first plantation of the churches ordained bishops (presbyters) and deacons with the consent of the whole Church." \*

If deacons were at first only chosen to attend to certain temporalities of the Church it is evident that some of them, at least, began almost immediately to discharge spiritual functions, and so the sphere of their activities became at once enlarged. Stephen is an eminent example. He boldly proclaimed the truth of God, and his enemies "were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake." Acts vi, 10. He also sealed the truth with his blood, and became the first martyr of the Christian Church. Philip, also one of the seven, became a noted and successful evangelist. Dr. Thomas Scott says: "The deacons were primarily appointed to dispense the charity of the Church and to manage its secular concerns; yet they preached occasionally or taught in private, or were readers in the public assemblies, and pastors and evangelists were chosen from among them." †

Admitting that the seven were ordained by the apostles to a specific secular work (Acts vi), it is easy to trace the expansion of the work into a higher and a spiritual sphere. "The possession of any special *χάρισμα* (spiritual endowment) would lead naturally

\* King's *Prim. Ch.*, p. 41.

† Scott's *Com.*, 1 Tim. iii.



to a higher work and office, but the idea that the diaconate was but a probation through which a man had to pass before he could be an elder or bishop was foreign to the constitution of the Church of the first century.\* The fathers in the early post-apostolic Church very frequently refer to them as those who preach the word of life, and they are associated with the presbyters as having authority. Polycarp, the disciple of John, says: "Wherefore, it is needful to abstain from all these things, being subject to the presbyters and deacons as unto God and Christ. The virgins also must walk in a blameless and pure conscience."†

Also, in the epistle attributed to Ignatius, contemporary with Polycarp: "I exhort you to study to do all things with a divine harmony while your bishop presides in the place of God, and your presbyters in the place of the assembly of the apostles along with your deacons who are most dear to me, and are intrusted with the ministry of Jesus Christ."‡ "It behooves you also, in every way, to please the deacons who are ministers of the mysteries of Christ Jesus; for they are not ministers of meat and drink, but servants of the Church of God."§ Again, "And what is the presbytery but a sacred assembly, the counselors and assessors of the bishop? And what are the deacons but imitators of the angelic powers (or

\* McClintock and Strong, art. "Deacon." † *Epist. Polycarp*, c. v.

‡ *Epist. Ignatius, Mag.*, c. vi.

§ *Ibid, Tral.*, c. ii.

Christ), fulfilling a pure and blameless ministry unto him, as the holy Stephen did to the blessed James, Timothy and Linus to Paul, Anencletus and Clement to Peter? He, therefore, that will not yield obedience to such must needs be one utterly without God, an impious man who despises Christ, and depreciates his appointments." \*

It is not necessary to multiply quotations from the Church fathers to show that the deacons of the apostolic and post-apostolic churches preached the Gospel and were permanent officers of the Church organization, and were not simply candidates for a higher order in the ministry. All the witnesses prior to A. D. 680 speak of the diaconate in connection with spiritual services or the rites of the Church.

If we take the thought suggested by Dean Howson, that as the deaconess is a conspicuous figure in the early Church, side by side with the deacon, and it is by this parallelism that we shall probably apprehend her position most correctly, can we not ascertain her work and place by finding those of the deacon? These duties were, to assist the presbyter or bishop in the service of the sanctuary and in the administration of the Lord's Supper. The deacon had power to administer the sacrament of baptism, and he instructed and catechized the catechumens. His part was, when the bishop or presbyter did not preach, to read a homily from one of the fathers, to receive the offer-

\* *Epist. Ignatius, Tral., c. vii.*

ings of the people, to act as usher in the church, to rebuke any that were disorderly in time of divine worship, "to take care of the necessitous orphans, widows, martyrs in prison, and all the poor and sick who had any claim upon the public resources of the Church." It was also his especial duty to care for the spiritual as well as the bodily wants of the people. Preaching does not seem to have been necessarily connected with his office so much as to catechize and instruct, but this instructing in the principles and doctrines of Christianity was near akin to preaching; and in the absence of the bishop he served as a substitute, though not presenting his own expositions, but "reading a homily from one of the fathers." This, however, was a restriction of former privileges. St. Ambrose, bishop of Milan, A. D. 380, says expressly that deacons, in his time, did not preach, though he thinks that they were all originally evangelists, as were Philip and Stephen.

Preaching was not so closely confined to the clergy in the first centuries of Christianity as at a later period. The administration of the rites of the Church was confined to them, but preaching could be performed by laymen when invited by the bishop. Lord King shows this in his *Primitive Church* by citing the case of Origen, "who, going from Alexandria to Palestine, by the desire of the bishops of that country publicly preached in the church, and expounded the Holy Scriptures, although he was not yet in holy

orders." A certain bishop, being offended at this, wrote against it. Alexander, bishop of Jerusalem, and Theoctistus of Cesarea wrote to him in defense of it as follows: "Whereas you write in your letter that it was never before seen, or done, that laymen should preach in the presence of bishops, therein you wander from the truth; for wheresoever any are found that are fit to profit the brethren, the holy bishops, of their own accord, ask them to preach unto the people."\*

This was not done in any disorderly way, so that the "sacred office" was not prostituted thereby. It was only with the consent, or at the invitation, of the bishop of the Church, and only by those who were "fit to profit the brethren." The same custom was followed by the Puritans, and their intelligent laymen, one after another, expounded the Scriptures and instructed the people. In justification of this course they cited the instance quoted above.† In regard to the constitution of the early churches and this practice among them, another eminent authority says: "Their presidents were *the elders*, officially of equal rank. . . . Under the superintendents of these elders were the *deacons and deaconesses*. . . . The duty of teaching was by no means incumbent on the elders, although the apostle wishes that they should be *apt to teach*. The capacity for instructing and edifying in the assemblies was rather considered as a

\* King's *Prim. Ch.*, p. 163.

† Young's *Chron. Pil. Fathers*.

free gift of the Spirit (*χάρισμα πνευματικόν*), which manifested itself in many Christians, although in different modes (*προφήτης—διδάσκαλος—γλώσση λαλῶν*, 1 Cor. xii, 28–31; xiv). Still less was a distinct priestly order known at this time; for the whole society of Christians formed a royal priesthood (*Βασιλειον ιεράτευμα*, 1 Pet. ii, 9).\*

This shows that in primitive times the mere act of preaching or expounding the holy Scriptures was not reserved for the clergy, nor considered their exclusive right. God sometimes endowed others with gifts and graces to profit the brethren, and these were called forth by the proper church authority to exercise their gifts and edify the people, though they had not been ordained by the imposition of hands. When this custom was set aside it was a great loss to the Church, and it has gained immensely by its revival in modern times. Thus the whole line of lay preachers, of Methodism and of other Churches, and some of the most noted evangelists, both men and women, whom the world has ever seen, have been called forth to labor and bless mankind.

Let us now inquire as to the work of the deaconess. Was her work peculiar to herself? Or was it the same as that performed by the deacon? The view held by most historians of the Church is that the deaconess performed for the female portion of the congregation what the deacon did for the male por-

\* Geiseler, *Ch. His.*, vol. i, p. 90.

tion. After stating the work of the deacon Dr. Philip Schaff says: "Deaconesses, or female helpers, had a similar charge of the poor and sick in the female portion of the Church. This office was the more needful on account of the rigid separation of the sexes at that day, especially among the Greeks. It opened to pious women and virgins, and especially to widows, a most suitable field for the regular official exercise of their peculiar gifts of self-denying love and devotion to the welfare of the Church. Through it they could carry the light and comfort of the Gospel into the most private and delicate relations of domestic life, without at all overstepping their natural sphere. Paul mentions Phebe as a deaconess of the church at Cenchrea, the port of Corinth; and it is more than probable that Tryphena and Tryphosa and Persis, whom he commends for their labor in the Lord, served in the same capacity at Rome."\* By specifying the work of the deacon we have also specified the work of the deaconess. The wants of the female portion of the Church are substantially the same as those of the male portion.

The spiritual baptism that came upon the disciples at the Pentecost set every heart on fire with the love of God, and "they all began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance." This was remembered during the apostolic age, and some of the subjects of it, perhaps, survived the apostles.

\* P. Schaff, *Hist. Ch.*, vol. i, p. 135.

It was not an uncommon thing for women to speak or prophesy to the edification of the Church; and doubtless some of those who were set apart as deaconesses obeyed the divine impulse and told publicly and privately the story of the cross. Neither deacons nor deaconesses were specially ordained to the work of preaching in the early post-apostolic Church, and yet we are constrained to believe that it was not foreign to either. Priscilla took Apollos and "expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly," unfolding to his inquiring mind the Scriptures of truth. "The new life which pervaded the whole Christian society would lead women as well as men to devote themselves to the labors of love." \* Teaching was certainly a part of their work. "The social relations of the sexes in the cities of the empire would make it fitting that the agency of woman should be employed largely in the direct personal application of spiritual truth (Tit. ii, 3, 4), possibly in the preparation of female catechumens. Their duties were to take care of the sick and poor and to minister to martyrs and confessors in prison, to whom they could more easily gain access than the deacons; to instruct catechumens, and to assist at the baptism of women; to exercise a general oversight over the female members of the Church, and this not only in public, but in private, making occasional reports to the bishops and presbyters." †

\* McClintock & Strong.

† *Ibid.*

Jerome says: "Each in his own sex they ministered in baptism and in the ministry of the word."\*

At this point we will examine a very ancient work, called the *Apostolical Constitutions*, as in many instances it refers to the deaconess of the early Church. These so-called *Apostolical Constitutions* assume to have been formulated by the apostles, but that is not received by the learned. Nevertheless, their spuriousness does not destroy their historical value. If they are forgeries, they are very ancient, and must have reflected the customs of their times. The following is the result of the latest and best scholarship.

"We may accept as established the following positions:

"1. The *Apostolical Constitutions* are a compilation, the material being derived from sources differing in age.

"2. The first six books are the oldest; the seventh, in its present form somewhat later, but . . . proven to contain matter of a very ancient date. The eighth book is of latest date.

"3. It now seems to be generally admitted that the entire work is not later than the fourth century, although the usual allowance must be made for later textual changes, whether by accident or design."†

We have quoted the above because we shall have

\* "In suo sexu ministrabant in baptismo et ministerio verbi."—Jerome on Rom. xvi, 1.

† *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. vii, p. 388.



occasion to refer to the work showing the character and duties of the deaconess and her ordination to office in the Church.

“Let the deaconess be a pure virgin, or, at the least, a widow who has been but once married, faithful and well esteemed.”\* It is evident that in the first Christian age some married women were deaconesses, as Priscilla, who traveled and labored with her husband, but is generally named first, probably because of greater energy and an official position in the Church. But the provision above is a very natural one, because the cares of a family generally would preclude a married woman from devoting all her time to the work of a deaconess; and a married woman, having her own home, and being provided for by her husband, could devote whatever time she could command to benevolent labors, and do the work of a deaconess without the distinctive title.

“For let the bishop preside over you as one honored with the authority of God, which he is to exercise over the clergy, and by which he is to govern all the people. But let the deacon minister to him as Christ does to his Father. . . . Let also the deaconess be honored by you in the place of the Holy Ghost, and not do or say any thing without the deacon; as neither does the Comforter say or do any thing of himself, but giveth glory to Christ by waiting for his pleasure. And as we cannot believe

\* *Apost. Con.*, Book ii, c. xvii.

on Christ without the teaching of the Spirit, so let not any woman address herself to the deacon or bishop without the deaconess." \*

This shows the honor in which the deaconess was held as belonging to the ministerial orders of the Church. It also shows how soon the Church departed from the truth, giving an honor and importance to ministers which God never designed they should have, and which had no parallel or precedent in apostolic times. To represent the bishop as having the authority of God, and placing the deacon in the same relation to the bishop that the Son of God is to his Father, and the deaconess in the place of the Holy Ghost, seems to us but little short of blasphemy.

It was also provided that "the deaconesses should stand at the entrances of the women," as the deacons did at those of the men, and should provide places for strangers who had come in to worship. "Nay, if a poor man, or one of a mean family, or a stranger comes upon you, whether he be old or young, and there be no place, the deacon shall find a place for even these, and that with all his heart; that, instead of accepting persons before men, his ministration toward God may be well pleasing. The very same things let the deaconess do to those women, whether poor or rich, that come unto them." †

"Ordain also a deaconess who is faithful and holy

\* *Apost. Cons.*, Book ii, c. xxvi.

† *Ibid.*, Book ii, c. lvii, lviii.

for the ministrations toward women. For sometimes he cannot send a deacon, who is a man, to the women, on account of unbelievers. Thou shalt therefore send a woman, a deaconess, on account of the imaginations of the bad. For we stand in need of a woman, a deaconess, for many necessities; and, first, in the baptism of women the deacon shall anoint only their foreheads with the holy oil, and after him the deaconess shall anoint them, for there is no necessity that the women should be seen of the men." \*

This is somewhat minute in detail, and shows the same state of things in the early Church that exists today in many parts of the world, and the same necessity for care and caution to prevent reproach. Circumstances are such now sometimes, even where women are not secluded, that "a deacon who is a man cannot be sent on account of the imaginations of the bad."

This is the case in many of the Eastern countries, where women are now much more secluded than they were then among the Greeks. Our missions are being planted all over those lands, where it is impossible for men to reach the women, and the work is hindered thereby, and the conversion of the world delayed. How slow the modern Church has been to follow the example set in apostolic and primitive times!

"O bishop, do thou ordain thy fellow-workers, the laborers for life and for righteousness. . . .

\* *Apost. Cons.*, Book iii, c. xv.

Ordain also a deaconess who is faithful and holy for the ministrations toward women." \* These early fathers recognized the necessity of ordaining women to give the ministrations of religion to women. They were willing to yield to the custom of their age and send the word of God and the ordinances of the Church to women by women duly qualified and appointed, rather than attempt to drag them forth to be seen of men, where custom and every instinct of their nature made the act repellent. "For there is no necessity that the women should be seen of the men." Under certain circumstances the deaconess was to discharge the duties of the deacon when a proper regard for purity of character and reputation would preclude the presence and services of the latter.

After the sacrament of baptism had been administered by the bishop it was ordered, "Let a deacon receive the man and a deaconess the woman, that so the conferring of this inviolable seal may take place with a becoming decency." † "And let the deaconess be diligent in taking care of the women, but both of them (deacon and deaconess) ready to carry messages, to travel about, to minister, and to serve." ‡ "The traditional journey of Phebe to Rome with St. Paul's epistle would thus be strictly within the limits of her functions." §

There is one more reference to the duties of

\* *Apost. Cons.*, Book iii, c. xv.

† *Ibid.*, Book iii, c. xvi.

‡ *Ibid.*, Book iii, c. xix.

§ Ludlow, p. 16.

the deaconess in the *Constitutions* which demands our special attention: "A deaconess does not bless or perform any thing belonging to the office of presbyters or deacons, but only is to keep the doors and to minister to the presbyters in the baptizing of women, on account of decency." \* From this it appears that the deaconess was not held in such honor and esteem when the last of the above quotations was written as when the others were penned. This is accounted for by the fact that the *Constitutions* are of unequal antiquity, the *eighth book* being much later than the others. "There is a complete opposition of tone between chapter xv of Book III, which says that we need a woman deacon for many purposes, and chapter xxviii of Book VIII, which reduces her functions to doorkeeping and ministering at female baptisms. Evidently in the older *Constitutions* the deaconess's office is far more real and more honorable." † Let it also be observed that the *Constitution* which reduces the functions of the deaconess also reduces the functions of the deacon: "A deacon does not bless, does not give the blessing, but receives it from the bishop and presbyter. He does not baptize, he does not offer, but when a bishop or presbyter has offered he distributes to the people, not as priest, but as one that ministers to the priests." ‡

\* Book viii, c. xxviii.

† Ludlow, p. 21.

‡ *Apost. Cons.*, Book viii, c. xxviii.

This takes from the deacon the power to baptize, but by other writers this is clearly given to him. "Deacons had power to administer the sacrament of baptism. The Council of Eliberis, Canon 77, plainly acknowledges this right."\* They assisted "the bishops or presbyters in the celebration of the eucharist, delivering the elements to the communicants; they also preached, and in the absence of the bishop and presbyters baptized."† And we are not without evidence that deaconesses also performed the same functions. A commentary on the Pauline epistles, falsely ascribed to Jerome, and supposed to have been written in the fifth century, has the following note on Rom. xvi, 1: "As even now in the East women called deaconesses appear to minister in baptism or in the ministry of the word, since we find women to have taught privately, as Priscilla."‡ From the sixth century onward there are but few notices of deaconesses in the Greek Church, and these scattered at long intervals. Some canons were enacted in relation to the age of ordination. In the seventh century her office is referred to in relation to the baptizing of women. In the eleventh century it is also named in connection with the interpretation of Titus ii, 3. Balsamon, patriarch of Antioch, writing toward the end of the twelfth century, treats the office as nearly extinct;

\* McClintock &amp; Strong.

† King's *Prim. Ch.*, p. 70.

‡ Ludlow, p. 65.

and the manner in which he writes of deaconesses shows that they had been lost in female monachism. "As virgins," he writes, "they were received by the Church and guarded according to the command of the bishop, as consecrated to God, except that they wore the garb of the laity, . . . and at forty years old they received ordination as deaconesses, being found qualified in all respects." \*

We cannot trace the growth of the early Church and the distinctive orders of the clergy without being impressed with the ambitious character of some of those in high places, and with the fact that efforts were made to deprive the lower clergy of some of the functions of their office, and to give to those above them more exclusive power and authority. Thus the deaconess was deprived of her ministerial functions, and finally, as we shall discover, was dropped out of the Church altogether.

So it has been in the Church of modern times. When God has laid upon the heart of man any great truth and duty, as he did upon the hearts of Luther and Wesley, and those truths have been promulgated and the Church has been aroused as from the slumber of ages, and taken on new life and vigor, she has in spirit and form gone back to the customs of primitive times; and as the work has grown and become older the primitive customs have been ignored, and ambitious men have ruled in the place of Christ.

\* Ludlow, p. 61.

## CHAPTER VII.

## THE ORDINATION OF DEACONESSSES.

IT seems right and proper that any person called of God to discharge important duties in the government and care of his Church should be set apart to that work by some special religious services, so that the candidate and all the people may be suitably impressed with the importance and solemnity of the office with which the person is invested. The mere act of ordination to the work of the Christian ministry has been given an importance in Church history and religious controversy far beyond its intrinsic value. It has no interest to us "in reference to the dogma of a lineal apostolical succession, and the consequences supposed to flow through it as a channel of transmitted grace,"\* and we discuss it only as a formal religious act of induction to an ecclesiastical office and work.

Christ did indeed ordain or appoint his twelve apostles and the seventy disciples, but, so far as the sacred record shows, without symbolical act or ceremony. The seven deacons mentioned in Acts vi were chosen by the people and ordained by the apostles, by

\* McClintock & Strong, art. "Ordination."



prayer and the laying on of hands. "This marked event in the history of the Church occurred in immediate sequel of the great outpouring of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost, and from the space allotted to it in the Scriptures, as well as from the fact that all the apostles were present, it may now be considered, as it doubtless was during the whole apostolic period, a model ordination for the subsequent Church." \* So Barnabas and Saul were set apart, under the direction of the Holy Ghost, by prayer and the laying on of hands. Acts xiii, 2, 3. Saul of Tarsus had been preaching the Gospel of Christ for ten years before this. Both Barnabas and Saul had acted as evangelists, and their word had been signally blessed of God. Their ordination did not give them any new power as preachers of the Gospel, but it was a recognition by the Church and an official indorsement of them. They had been commissioned to preach by the Holy Ghost, and now by his direction they were commissioned to "baptize converts, organize Christian congregations, and to ordain Christian ministers."

The act of ordination was significant. "When a Jewish father invoked a benediction on any of his family he laid his hand on the head of his child; when a Jewish priest devoted an animal in sacrifice he laid his hand on the head of the victim; and when a Jewish ruler invested another with office he laid his hand on the head of the new functionary." † So men

\* McClintock & Strong, art. "Ordination."

† *Ibid.*

and women, in the primitive Church, were "separated" to the special work to which God had called them. This instance illustrates the conditions observed in the ordination of the deacons: "(1.) The candidates were men called of the Holy Ghost; (2.) They were separated unto the work of the Lord by prayer, accompanied with fasting; (3.) Hands were laid upon them by representative men of the Church, doubtless the elders, among whom no apostle was present, and as yet the office of bishop had not been instituted."\* This could not be other than a presbyterial ordination, but who would question its validity? This is such an ordination as is defined by Lord King in the following language: "The grant of a peculiar commission and power, which remains indelible in the person to whom it is committed, and can never be eradicated or erased out, except the person himself cause it by his heresy, apostasy, or most gross and scandalous impiety."†

Such an ordination is reasonable, religious, impressive, and sanctioned by the Holy Ghost. Let us see what evidence we have that deaconesses were set apart in the same way. We have seen that they formed a part of the apostolic Church organization, and though we find no Scripture which definitely says they were set apart by prayer and the imposition of hands we have good reason to believe that

\* McClintock & Strong, art. "Ordination."

† *Primitive Church*, p. 72.

they were thus ordained. We find men-deacons and women-deacons in the same church filling the same office and doing the same work, the one to the male portion and the other to the female portion of the congregation. It is fair to presume that both were inducted to office in the same form.

A distinction has been made by some writers between the imposition of hands as a ceremonial benediction and a real ordination, but in the light of Church history and the best scholarship this distinction cannot stand. Bingham, in his *Christian Antiquities*, repudiates it. Ludlow contends that the deaconess received a real ordination. The question is certainly decided by the Council of Nice. In one of its canons it distinguishes between such as had and such as had not been ordained by the imposition of hands, saying: "Those who assume the habit and dignity of the office, never having had the imposition of hands, are to be reckoned only among the laity."\* So also Dr. Philip Schaff: "The custom of ordaining deaconesses is placed beyond dispute." "But the consecration of the deaconess was certainly accompanied with the imposition of hands in the presence of the whole clergy."† We can see no reason why this should ever have been questioned or disallowed. It probably never would have been had the clergy retained more of the spirit of the Gospel and less of the

\* Council of Nice, Canon 19, quoted from C. S. Henry.

† Schaff, *Church History*, vol. ii, p. 261.

ambition and spirit of the world. The ordination of deaconesses was in accord with the faith of the primitive Church and the sacred office to which they were called. Men felt that all spiritual work must be done by the help of the Holy Ghost, that no spiritual victories could be won without his influence, and, as men were set apart by special acts of devotion, why not women? Was their work less difficult or important? Were they less in need of help than men? Surely not!

In proof that they were ordained, and in illustration of the mode, we will here give the form of prayer used at their ordination. The *Apostolical Constitutions* gives the following directions to the bishop for the ordination of the deaconess. It is assumed to have been written by the apostle Bartholomew.

“Concerning a deaconess, I, Bartholomew, make this constitution: O bishop, thou shalt lay thy hands upon her in the presence of the presbytery, and of the deacons and deaconesses, and shalt say: O Eternal God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Creator of man and of woman, who didst replenish with the Spirit Miriam, and Deborah, and Anna, and Huldah; who didst not disdain that thy only begotten Son should be born of a woman; who also in the tabernacle of the testimony, and in the temple, didst ordain women to be keepers of thy holy gates—do thou now also look down upon this thy servant, who is to be ordained to the office of a deaconess, and grant her thy Holy Spirit, and cleanse her from

all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, that she may worthily discharge the work which is committed to her to thy glory, and the praise of thy Christ, with whom glory and adoration be to thee and the Holy Spirit forever. Amen." \*

This places beyond all dispute the ordination of women to the order and office of deaconess in the early Church. While the scholarship of the present day does not in any sense accept the above as the work of the apostles, still it must have reflected the customs of the Church at, and prior to, the time when it was written, and, as we have before stated, its date is placed from the second to the fourth century. In addition to what is given above we present the following from an early source of information. Dean Howson says: "In the collection of the ordination services of the Nestorian Christians as published by the younger Assemani, I find a distinct 'Ordo Chirotoniæ Mulierum Diaconissarum,' parallel for the most part to the similar service for the appointment of deacons. Here, among other suitable prayers, which are quite in harmony with the spirit of that which is quoted from the *Apostolical Constitutions* the following occurs: "

"Lord God Omnipotent, who hast made all things by the word of thy power, and in thy command hold-est the universe which thou didst create at thy pleasure; who hast taken pleasure likewise in men and

\* *Apost. Cons.*, Book viii, chaps. xix, xx.

women that thou shouldst give unto them the gift of the Holy Spirit; thou, Lord, even now, through thy pity, choose this thy poor handmaid to the good work of the diaconate, and give unto her grace, that without blemish she may finish before thee this great and sublime ministry, and that she may be guarded without hurt in all works of virtue; and that she may instruct the assembly of women, and teach purity and just and good works; and justly to obtain from thee the reward of (her) good works in the great and glorious day of the revelation of thine Only Begotten. Wherefore to thee and to him, and to the Holy Spirit, pertain glory, honor, thanksgiving, and adoration. Amen!"\*

Dean Howson held to the view that the imposition of hands was a ceremonial benediction. In proof of this, after giving the above prayer with the rubric, he quotes in Latin Assemani's comment on the services, of which the following is a translation: "Although the deaconesses had no sacred rank in the Church, nevertheless, through an inauguration purely ceremonial, they were intended for some pious ministry among women."† But Assemani as a commentator on the practices of the early Church is not en-

\* *Deaconesses*, Dean Howson, preface, page 15. Dean Howson here gives the Latin form of the prayer which we translate. He quoted from the *Codex Liturg. Eccles. Univ.* (Rome, 1771). He gives this note: "The bibliographers say that this volume of the work is rare. My extracts are made from a copy in the Cambridge University Library, which was formerly Bishop Van Mildert's."

† Dean Howson, p. 17.

titled to as much credence as later scholars. He wrote in the eighteenth century, and was not remarkable for accurate or profound scholarship; and he also wrote in the interest of Roman Catholicism and the support of hierarchical pretensions.

Matthew Blastar, a writer of the fourteenth century, has preserved the ceremonies used in the ordination of a deaconess: "She was presented to the bishop in front of the sanctuary, her neck and shoulders covered with a small cloak called 'Marforium.' After a prayer, beginning with the words, 'The grace of God,' she bent her head without bowing her knees, and the bishop then laid his hands on her, pronouncing the accustomed prayer."\*

In Tertullian we find the following allusion to ordained women: "How many men, therefore, and how many women in ecclesiastical orders owe their position to continence who have preferred to be wedded to God!"†

Bishop A. C. Coxe says this is a reference "to *deaconesses* as women in ecclesiastical orders."‡ The Theodosian Code (438) fixes the age of their ordination, and provides that if they have children when they enter the diaconate a guardian shall be appointed. The fiftieth canon of the Council of Chalcedon enacts that "the deaconess shall not be ordained before her fortieth year, and this with the

\* Moreri, quoted by Ludlow, p. 62. † Tert., *Echort. Chastity*, c. xiii.

‡ *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. iv, 58.

utmost deliberation ; but if, receiving the imposition of hands, and remaining some time in the ministry, she gives herself over to marriage, doing despite to the grace of God, let her be accursed together with her paramour.” \*

In A. D. 535 a law was enacted for the government of the Eastern Church which has a “chapter specially devoted to the ordination of deaconesses not under fifty years of age. They are to be neither young nor in the prime of life nor of an age of itself prone to sin, but beyond the middle time of life ; either widows of one husband or professed virgins ; of a life not only well-famed, but not even suspected. If any should of necessity be ordained before the prescribed age she is to remain in some ascetery. The deaconess is to live either alone or only with her parents and her children or her brothers, or otherwise with such persons as to whom any suspicion of scandal would appear of itself silly and impious, but not with any other relative, or any of those persons called ‘beloved.’ On her ordination she is to be admonished, and to hear the holy precepts in presence of the other deaconesses already in functions. If she leave the ministry to enter into marriage, or to choose any other mode of life, she is subject to the penalty of death, and her property is to be applied to the use of the church or convent in which she is, the same penalties being incurred by her hus-

\* Ludlow, p. 53.



band or seducer, with the exception that his property is to be confiscated for the benefit of the State." \*

The evidence that women were ordained to some of the sacred functions of the ministry is very abundant in the annals of the early Church. These officers were perpetuated and retained so long as the Church observed the truth and precedents transmitted by the apostles. Not until the priesthood became corrupt and ambitious were they set aside. So long as the Church kept to the work committed to it by Christ, instructing the ignorant, comforting the afflicted, and seeking to bring lost souls to the fountain of cleansing, the deaconesses were found among its working forces. But we can trace the growth of sacerdotalism, when apostolic precepts were set aside and the commandments of men adopted in their stead; when superstition gained the ascendancy and the spiritual power of the Church was lost in its ever-increasing forms. In evidence of the ordination of deaconesses, and to show the position they held at the end of the fifth century, we give the following:

“At this period, therefore (first half of the sixth century), the office of deaconess in the Eastern Church has become purely sacerdotal, forming a sort of connecting link between the secular and the regular clergy. The honor of the office has not departed. There is not, even at this late period of which we are treating, the smallest trace in the authorities of a gen-

\*Ludlow, p. 56.

eric difference between the ordination of the deaconess and that of the other members of the clergy, the word ordination being strictly rendered in the Greek version by the technical one of *χειροθεσία*, laying on of hands. The same terms of 'most reverend' and 'venerable' are applied to deaconesses as to the bishop and other clergy; the rules respecting them are comprised in the same ordinances of the civil power, and their rank clearly fixed on a par with that of the deacons and before the sub-deacons and other inferior clergy; and they are the only class of females who are thus ranked in the clergy, the virgins, widows, nuns, being clearly not included with them in this respect, although assimilated to them in others. Their functions, as far as they are spoken of, are those 'of coming to the holy ministry, ministering to the adorable ceremonies of baptism, and assisting at the other mysteries, which are lawfully celebrated by them in the venerable ministrations' of the Church."\*

It may be interesting to inquire how these female officers were selected, and the qualifications deemed necessary for the office. As the functions of deacon and deaconess were so much alike, it is reasonable to suppose that the method of selection and the qualifications would be similar. The apostolic requirements for the deacon and deaconess were virtually the same. "Likewise *must* the deacons be

\* Ludlow, p. 59.

grave, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. And let these also first be proved, then let them use the office of a deacon, being *found* blameless. Even so *must their wives be grave*, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things." 1 Tim. iii, 8-11.

These were the directions given by the apostle as to the general qualifications and character of those who were to be selected as deacons.

On this passage Dr. D. D. Whedon has the following comment:

"*Wives*—The Greek word may signify either *woman* or *wife*. The *their* is not in the Greek. The question thence arises whether St. Paul means *wives of the deacons* or *deaconesses*. The absence of any prescription for the wives of the elders seems very decisive in favor of the latter."

The same opinion is expressed by many of the Greek and Latin Church fathers and by many modern commentators. Dr. Adam Clarke thinks it probable that Paul meant deaconesses, and Lange understands it of the "wives of deacons, who were also deaconesses."

We give the following as the criticism of an eminent modern scholar on the question in discussion, and to show his high appreciation of the office of deaconess, and what the Church has suffered by its extinction:

"The error of inserting the article where it is absent

is less frequent than that of omitting it where it is present, but not less injurious to the sense. Thus, in 1 Tim. iii, 11, *γυναικας ὡσαύτως σεμνὰς* would hardly have been rendered 'even so must *their wives* be grave,' if the theory of the definite article had been understood; for our translators would have seen that the reference is to *γυναικας διακόνους*, 'women-deacons' or 'deaconesses,' and not to the wives of the deacons.

"The office of deaconess is mentioned only in one other passage in the New Testament (Rom. xvi, 1), and there also it is obliterated in the English version by the substitution of the vague expression "which is a servant" for the more definite *οὔσαν διάκονον*. If the testimony borne in these two passages to a ministry of women in the apostolic times had not been thus blotted out of our English Bibles, attention would probably have been directed to the subject at an earlier date, and our English Church would not have remained so long maimed in one of her hands."\*

"Let these first be proved" (verse 10). "Not by prefixing a period of probation; but by the scrutiny of the Church and eldership, carefully noting their lives, character, and qualifications, and making them a matter of free discussion, in order to a right decision by vote before ordination."† These servants of the Church, men and women, were selected, examined,

\* J. B. Lightfoot, D.D., *Revision of New Test.*, p. 104.

† Whedon, *in loco*.

and voted on, accepted or rejected, as the mind of the Church might be in regard to them. The office was not, like that of healing, prophecy, and the gift of tongues, a special gift and calling by the Holy Ghost without the agency of man, but a selection made by the Church of those whom they thought qualified, both by gifts and graces, to fill the position. In the post-apostolic Church the examination included these special features; namely, age, condition in the world, conversation, and understanding.

Some of the Church fathers, applying to the deaconess the words of Paul which he spoke concerning widows, fixes the age of their ordination at sixty. The fifteenth canon of the Council of Chalcedon enacts that "the deaconess shall not be ordained before her fortieth year." This was confirmed by several later enactments, and was for many years the age at which she was ordained.

The diaconate was regarded as a stepping-stone to a higher office or degree in the sacred ministry. It is in this sense that the words of Paul are understood by many: "For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus." 1 Tim. iii, 13. (See Wesley, Wordsworth, and Whedon.) Not that all who served as deacons would be advanced to the presbyterate, but the custom was to select from the most excellent or devoted Christian people the deacons and deaconesses, and some of these, who were

called of God, were advanced to the higher orders in the Christian ministry. "In the Clementine Constitutions are prayers for the deacon in which we read the words: 'Render worthy him who has performed the deaconship to him committed, inflexibly, blamelessly, unimpeachably, to be exalted to a higher *step*.'"\* Lord King also shows that this was the common rule. Those who in the inferior positions and offices of the Church showed their ability and integrity were exalted to the higher, gradually proceeding through all the others till they came to the supreme office of all."†

In the early Church a direct call of God was not deemed essential to the office and work of a deacon or deaconess, as we believe it is in the case of those who preach God's word; yet it would seem most probable that those who served at the altar as the servants of the bishop, watched over the flock of God, and read homilies to the congregation in the absence of the superior minister would feel impelled by the Holy Ghost to preach the word, as did the original deacons, Stephen and Philip, and thus add to the diaconate the work of an evangelist. There is no doubt but this was the case from the beginning.

When the deacon or other of the lower ecclesiastics felt this call of God did they make it known? "Whosoever desired to be admitted into this sacred office (the presbyterate), he first proposed himself to the presbytery of the parish where he dwelt and was to

\* Whedon, *in loco*.

† *Primitive Church*, p. 72.

be ordained, desiring their consent to his designed intention, praying them to confer upon him those holy orders which he craved.”\* If, after due examination, he was found worthy he was elected and ordained.

As to the promotion of men-deacons to the presbyterate there is no doubt; but were any of the women-deacons of the early Church so promoted?

Paul says: “The aged women likewise, that *they* be in behavior as becometh holiness; not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things.” Titus ii, 3. Some of the best modern critics, both German and English, infer from this the existence of female presbyters. “As the manners of the Greeks did not permit men to have much intercourse with women of character, unless they were their relatives, and as the Asiatics were under still greater restraints, it was proper that an order of female teachers should be instituted in the Church for instructing the young of their own sex. These it seems were generally widows, Clement of Alexandria reckoning widows among ecclesiastical persons; and Grotius tells us that these female presbyters, or elders, were ordained by imposition of hands till the Council of Laodicea.”†

The passage from Clement is as follows: “Innumerable commands such as these are written in the Holy Bible appertaining to chosen persons, some to presbyters, some to bishops, some to deacons, others

\* King's *Primitive Church*, p. 73. † Dr. Benson, *in loco*.

to widows." \* Widows here being named with presbyters, bishops, and deacons as *chosen* persons indicates that they held official position to which they were chosen by the Church.

On the same passage Dean Howson remarks: "In the Epistle to Titus certain 'aged women' are mentioned whose qualifications are very much the same as those required elsewhere of presbyters and bishops, especially in regard to their being 'apt to teach.' This circumstance might at first seem of no great moment, but we are inclined to attend to it a little more closely when we notice that the word translated 'aged women' is not that which elsewhere in the pastoral epistles is rendered 'elder women,' but is precisely one of the terms employed by primitive Greek writers as an official designation of those who did the work of deaconesses. So of the 'widows' mentioned (1 Tim. v, 9) as placed on a definite 'list' or 'roll,' we observe that their qualifications are remarkably like those required of presbyters. At first sight we might be disposed to think only of widows registered for the receipt of relief. . . . But when we look well at the whole context, when we notice the limitations of age, . . . we seem to see along with the receipt of support from the Church *correlative duties* also implied; we seem to discover traces of an order of widows, not identical perhaps with the deaconesses, but belonging to a different department of the same

\* Clement, *Instructor*, Book iii, c. xii.



kind of organization." \* Professor Ellicott remarks that the duties of these "widows" were probably "presbyterial rather than diaconic." Dean Alford takes the same view, and Dr. Wordsworth closes his note on the passage in the following words: "We may also be permitted to cherish a hope that these apostolic counsels may hereafter bear more abundant fruit than is now the case. The offices of the *deaconess* and of the *widow* are here commended by the Holy Spirit to the reverent regard and affectionate use of the Church. It is much to be regretted that these offices have fallen almost into desuetude by reason of the human corruptions by which the divine counsels of the apostle have been marred, especially from the imposition of vows of celibacy. The abuses by which these offices have been blemished have entailed on the Church a forfeiture of the benefits derivable from the offices themselves. But it is the part of the Reformation to separate the abuses of things from the things themselves that are abused. And it would be a blessed work of Christian charity to restore the office of *widow* and *deaconess* in the Church to their primitive simplicity; and so to engage the affections and sympathies, and to exercise the quiet piety and devout zeal of Christian women, old and young, in the service of Christ in a regular and orderly manner, under the guidance of lawful authority, and with its commission and benediction, accord-

\* Dean Howson, p. 57.

ing to the apostolic model prescribed by the Holy Ghost."\*

On 1 Tim. v, 9, Van Oosterzee says: "Such widows, called presbyteresses, seem to have had the same relation toward their own sex as the presbyters toward the men. . . . True, we find no further trace of such an institution in the apostolic letters; but this one is quite sufficient, and the oldest Church fathers also call it an apostolic tradition."†

This author thinks the order of deaconesses grew out of the more ancient order of presbyteresses. This, no doubt, is an error, as the great preponderance of scholarship and authority places the deaconess in the apostolic Church side by side with the female presbyter. Dr. Washburn, the translator of Van Oosterzee, says: "We can easily understand that such a Church widowhood had its official duty and honor; and as the ranks of Church authority became more settled, as the deacon became at last the assistant of the presbyter, so the deaconess, hitherto a general phrase for such ministering women, became an order next to that of the female presbyter."‡ And no doubt some deaconesses, who had proved themselves worthy, had been promoted to the rank of presbyteresses.

Many commentators believe the passage Titus ii, 3, has reference to aged women members of the Church,

\* Wordsworth, quoted by Howson, p. 55.

† Van Oosterzee, Lange, *in loco*. ‡ Washburn, Lange, *in loco*.

and not to any special persons holding an official relation. Be this as it may, we find traces of the female presbyters in the canons of the councils and the writings of the Church fathers. The eleventh canon of the Council of Laodicea (A. D. 360 to 370) forbids the appointment of female elders or presbyters, and the forty-fourth canon forbids women entering into the altar. The following is the original and translation of the eleventh canon as given by Ludlow :

“ Περὶ τοῦ μὴ δεῖν τὰς λεγομενας πρεσβυτίδας, ἧτοι προκαθημένας, ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ καθίστασθαι, ‘ That one ought not to establish in the Church the women called πρεσβυτίδας, or presidents ’—rendered in the Latin, both by Dionysius Exiguus and the later Helvetus, ‘ presbyteræ,’ ‘ præidentes.’ ” \*

On this point we give another criticism. “ Of particular interest among the decisions of this council is Canon 11, forbidding the employment of women as preachers. Hefele holds that the canon has hardly been properly translated, and that the desire of the council was simply to forbid *superior deaconesses* in the Church. The difficulty as to the meaning arises from the fact that the canons were written in Greek, and the question hinges on the *meaning* intended for πρεσβύτιδες and προκαθήμεναι.” †

This canon must have been aimed at a practice then in vogue, that of ordaining women to the presbyterate. We find also in the canons of the Council

\* Ludlow, p. 224.

† McClintock & Strong, art. “ Laodicea.”

or Synod of Rome, A. D. 720 or 721, anathemas pronounced against "whosoever should marry a female presbyter." Here are references to an ordained officer in the Church at two distinct periods, at least three hundred and fifty years apart. If the eleventh canon of the Council of Laodicea be rightly understood as forbidding the ordination of female presbyters, then it is evident that the canons of councils did not always prohibit the practices against which they were directed. Canon after canon was enacted against the ordination of deaconesses, and yet for centuries afterward the practice remained. The Council of Orange, Canon 26, "forbids the ordination of deaconesses in future, and directs that those actually ordained shall receive the benediction together with lay persons." The Council of Epaon, Canon 26, interdicts wholly within its jurisdiction the consecration of "widows who are called deaconesses." \*

These interdictions did not prevent the ordination of deaconesses. If forbidden in one place it was allowed in another. In A. D. 441 it was forbidden by the Council of Orange, in A. D. 517 by the Council of Epaon, but in A. D. 533 the second Council of Orleans enacted the "excommunication of any woman who, having received hitherto the blessing of the diaconate against the interdicts of the canons, shall have married again; showing that

\* Ludlow, p. 65.

in spite of previous prohibitions the practice of ordaining deaconesses still existed." \* We can see no reason why women should not have been ordained to the presbyterate, in spite of the canons forbidding it, as was the case with female deacons. The practice was less common, however, and the notices of them are more rare.

"While some of the Montanists allowed women to be bishops and presbyters, their practice was strongly opposed as unscriptural, and Tertullian condemns the allowing of women to baptize as contrary to the apostolic teaching. Yet it may well be doubted whether this was the earlier view of the Church, before the sacerdotal character of the ministry had come to be generally recognized." †

It might be proper to inquire as to the motive that prompted the women of the early Church to seek ordination to the work of the sacred ministry. We have no right to expect a higher order of virtue in women than in men, though we believe as a rule they are more devotional in spirit and more self-sacrificing in nature. Unworthy motives, no doubt, actuated some; motives of worldly policy and ambition, stress of circumstances, and domestic infelicity. Others were moved by the Spirit of God to seek ordination, and thus consecrate themselves to God and the Church for the welfare of humanity. Scenes of ignorance and suffering around them ap-

\* Ludlow, p. 66.

† Bennet's *Christ. Arch.*, p. 369.

pealed to their benevolent hearts, and a yearning for God would prompt them to seek that nearness to him and endowment of spiritual power which ordination by the imposition of hands was supposed to bring.

The following, which Ludlow calls the most interesting incident to be found in the annals of the Western Church, will illustrate the customs and feeling in regard to deaconesses which prevailed in the sixth century. It occurs in the story of St. Radegund, a Thuringian princess, wife of the Merovingian Chlothar I. of Neustria. After a long period of domestic wretchedness by the side of a brutal husband, and after seeing at least her only surviving brother, a hostage at Chlothar's convent, put to death by his orders, the queen fled to St. Médard, Bishop of Noyon. As he was in his church officiating at the altar she approached him crying, "Most holy priest, I must leave the world and change my garments. I entreat thee, most holy priest, do thou consecrate me to the Lord." The bishop hesitated. The Frankish lords and warriors who had followed the queen began to surround them and to cry aloud with threatening gestures, "Beware how thou givest the veil to a woman who is married to the king! Priest, refrain from robbing the prince of his solemnly wedded queen." The most furious among them, throwing hands upon him, dragged him violently from the altar-steps into

the nave of the church, while the queen, affrighted with the tumult, was seeking with her women a refuge in the vestry. But here, collecting herself, she threw a nun's dress over her regal garments, and, thus disguised, proceeded toward the sanctuary where St. Médard was sitting. "If thou shouldst delay consecrating me," said she, in a firm voice, "and shouldst fear men more than God, thou wilt have to render thy account, and the Shepherd shall require of thee the soul of his sheep." He ceased to hesitate, and of his own authority dissolved Radegund's marriage by consecrating her a deacon through the laying on of hands (*manu superposita consecravit diaconam*). The Frankish lords and vassals, carried away in their turn by the same feelings, durst no more take forcibly back to the royal residence one who in their eyes bore from henceforth the twofold character of a queen and of a woman consecrated to God's service.

On this narrative Ludlow has the following reflection: "This points us to a startling fact, which has no parallel in Eastern annals, that ordination to the female diaconate in the West was by this time considered equivalent to divorce."\* We may also remark that the Church was a refuge for distressed souls, and inculcated mercy and tenderness in the midst of barbaric cruelty; that superstition was mixed with reverence for sacred things, and that the Church was fast

\* Ludlow, p. 69. This narrative is condensed from Ludlow.

drifting toward that severe monachism which was so largely developed at a later period. This deaconess subsequently formed a sort of free convent, where the pleasures of literary society, even with men, were combined with devotional exercises and good works. We would not impugn the motives of this queen in seeking ordination to the work of God. While a desire to be free from a cruel and ungodly husband was an element in it, her severe trials may have led her to that prayer and devotion that issued in her consecration.

The operations of the Holy Ghost on the hearts of men and women have in every age been the same, only modified by surrounding circumstances and varying views of Gospel truth. In apostolic times women "prophesied," and some were set apart as deaconesses to serve God in his sanctuary, or teach the ignorant, visit the sick, and comfort those who were in distress. These impulses to Christian activity did not die with them; they have been felt in every age by godly women, and one of the greatest losses the world has ever suffered, and one of the greatest hinderances to its evangelization, has been that these impulses have been restrained and misdirected by men. Unnatural vows and a monastic life have absorbed and made barren of good what would have brought to the world a rich harvest of blessing.



## CHAPTER VIII.

THE WORK, CHARACTER, AND PERSECUTIONS OF THE  
ANCIENT DEACONESSES.

It has been observed that the deaconess of the earliest centuries was a parish deaconess; that is, she was a part of the local church organization, not living in community like those of the early Middle Ages or those of modern times. As Phebe was attached to a particular church, so others were attached to other churches, and there were more or less of them according to the needs of the congregation. Her work would be such as has already been described, performing for the female portion what the deacon did for the male portion of the Church membership, especially catechizing and instructing the catechumens, preparing them for baptism and assisting in the ceremony when the women were baptized. They also assisted in the arrangements for the *agapæ*, or love-feasts.

They also had special duties in relation to the sick and poor, bearing to them the alms of the charitable and offering the consolations of the Gospel of Christ. There is another feature of their pious work which was peculiarly suited to their tender, sympathetic nat-

ure—the taking special care of the suffering martyrs and confessors in prison, who in the first centuries were often confined in some loathsome dungeon, until the great festivals, when they were brought out and thrown to the wild beasts in the amphitheater to be torn in pieces, as a cruel pastime to tens of thousands of pagans. The deaconess could find access to them when others could not, and so fulfilled her peaceful and comforting ministry, pre eminently one of succor and consolation. This part of their work was called for from the beginning, as persecution was coeval with the Church. It is likely that these humble officers or servants shielded the more prominent ones in times of danger. Priscilla and Aquila had “laid down their necks” for Paul, and others, no doubt, in those days of persecution, performed acts of noble heroism in connection with their ministry.

The wonderful spread of Christianity in Rome gave rise to the persecution under Nero. Public clamor found in that wicked tyrant a pliant tool to carry out its wishes. Christians were maligned and accused of base crimes, and public execration was loud against them. “To put to silence the rumors against himself,” says Tacitus, “Nero laid his own crime on certain persons rendered odious by their heinous offenses, and whom the people called Christians; on these he inflicted the most cruel punishments.” The accusations against them were false. Justin Martyr,

in his denial, gives us an idea of what they were. "Do you believe," he exclaims, "that we devour men, and that, after our evening meal, we extinguish the lights to cover with darkness a hideous debauch?" "They drink the blood of a child," says one, "divide its members among them, make a covenant over this horrid sacrifice, and are pledged to silence by their common participation in crime." \* "The pious Christian, as he was desirous to obtain, or to escape, the glory of martyrdom, expected, either with impatience or with terror, the stated returns of the public games and festivals." †

Persecution after persecution succeeded each other for many generations, and tens of thousands fell victims to the rage and cruelty of pagan rulers and communities. The deaconesses would therefore find an abundance of opportunity to manifest their love and heroism. The strong attachment to each other shown by the early Christians was impressive and beautiful. No sufferer was forgotten by the Church, but those bound and in prison were remembered as well as those at liberty and in palaces.

"Persons cast into prison on account of their faith were visited, and supplied with necessary provisions. The unfortunate men who were condemned to the mines, and who were compelled to submit to the cruelty of harsh, unfeeling masters, were not forgotten by the sympathizing Church. The deeper the misery

\* *Early Years of Christianity*, p. 225. † Gibbon, vol. ii, p. 28.

and the greater the peril the more brightly shone the light of charity, and extraordinary care was bestowed upon those whose lot was peculiarly trying. The charities at such times were generous and methodical." \*

It cannot be expected that the deaconesses could escape a share in these persecutions. The ministers, the propagators and defenders of the faith, are generally the first to suffer, and that the most severely. The women were not exempt when Saul persecuted the Church in Jerusalem. He went into every house, "and haling men and women committed them to prison," and extended his inquisitorial investigations to strange cities, to bring all that he could find, "men and women, bound to Jerusalem." The Roman pagan would not be more lenient than the Jew.

Gibbon, speaking of the efforts made by the Roman magistrate to elicit from the persecuted Christian a denial of Christianity : says, "Varying his tone, according to the age, the sex, or the situation of the prisoners, he frequently condescended to set before their eyes any circumstance which could render life more pleasing, or death more terrible ; and to solicit, nay, to entreat them, that they would show some compassion to themselves, to their families and their friends." † "It is related that pious females, who were prepared to despise death, were sometimes con

\* Bennett, *Christ. Arch.*, p. 496.

† *Decline and Fall*, vol. ii, p. 30.

demned to a more severe trial, and called upon to determine whether they set a higher value on their religion or on their chastity." These were called by the judge who condemned them "impious virgins," who refused to burn incense on the altars of Venus. This is regarded by Gibbon as the mere fabrication of monks, but Milman says, "The more ancient as well as authentic memorials of the Church relate many examples of the fact of these *severe trials*, which there is nothing to contradict." \* It is also confirmed by Eusebius, who says that, under these circumstances, "the females, also, no less than the men, were strengthened by the doctrine of the divine word; so that some endured the same trials as the men, and bore away the same prizes of excellence. Some when forced away yielded up their lives rather than submit to the violation of their bodies." †

All females who thus suffered were not deaconesses. Some were virgins, and may have been of the order of deaconesses. If the ordinary female members of the Christian community suffered, no doubt the female ministers did. There is evidence in Pliny's letter to Trajan that this was the case. He was the friend of the emperor, and was appointed President of Bithynia, about A. D. 106, when some who had seen the apostles must have been still living. He found the country so full of Christians, and met with

\* *Decline and Fall*, vol. ii, p. 30; and Milman's note.

† Eusebius, Book viii, c. 14.

so many who were ready to suffer martyrdom, that at length, tired of executions, he wrote to the Emperor Trajan for directions. This letter is so well authenticated and so celebrated in Christian historical evidence, giving as it does such an interesting picture, both of the purity and sufferings of the early Christians, that we feel justified in inserting it entire :

“It is my constant custom, sir, to refer myself to you in all matters concerning which I have any doubt. For who can better direct me where I hesitate, or instruct me where I am ignorant? I have never been present at any trials of Christians, so that I know not well what is the subject-matter of punishment or of inquiry, or what strictness ought to be used in either. Nor have I been a little perplexed to determine whether any difference ought to be made upon account of ages, or whether the tender and the robust ought to be treated all alike; whether repentance should entitle to pardon, or whether it shall be of no advantage to him who has once been a Christian to have ceased being such; whether the name itself, although no crimes be detected, or whether only crimes belonging to the name ought to be punished. Concerning all these things I am in doubt.

“In the meantime I have taken this course with all who have been brought before me, and have been accused as Christians. I have put the question to them whether they were Christians. Upon their confessing to me that they were, I repeated the ques-

tion a second and a third time, threatening also to punish them with death. Such as still persisted, I ordered to be led away; for it was no doubt with me, whatever it was they should have confessed, that contumacy and inflexible obstinacy ought to be punished. There were others of the same madness, whom, because they are Roman citizens, I have noted down to be sent to the city.

“In a short time, the crime spreading itself even whilst under persecution, as is usual in such cases, divers sort of people came in my way. An information was presented to me without mentioning the author, containing the names of many persons, who, upon examination, denied that they were Christians, or had ever been so, who repeated after me an invocation of the gods, and with wine and frankincense sacrificed to your image, which, for that purpose, I had caused to be brought and set before them, together with the statues of the deities. Moreover, they reviled the name of Christ; none of which things, as is said, they who are really Christians can, by any means, be compelled to do; these, therefore, I thought proper to discharge.

“Others were named by an informer, who at first confessed themselves Christians, and afterward denied it. The rest said they had been Christians, but had left them, some three years ago, some longer, and one or more above twenty years. They all worshiped your image, and the statues of the gods; they also re-

viled Christ. They affirmed that the whole of their fault or error lay in this: that they were accustomed to meet together on a stated day before it was light, and sang among themselves, alternately, a hymn to Christ as a God (or addressed themselves in a form of prayer to Christ as to some God), and bound themselves by an oath (sacramento) not to the commission of any wickedness, but not to be guilty of theft, or robbery, or adultery; never to falsify their word, nor to deny a pledge committed to them, when called upon to return it. When these things were performed, it was their custom to separate, and then to come together again to a meal promiscuous and harmless, but which had been forborne since the publication of my edict, by which, according to your commands, I prohibited assemblies.

“Through this I judged it more necessary to examine, and that by torture, two maid-servants, who were called ministers;\* but I have discovered nothing besides a bad and excessive superstition.

“Suspending, therefore, proceeding, I have recourse to you for advice. For it has appeared to me a matter worthy of consideration, especially on account of the great number of persons who are in danger of suffering. For many of all ages and of both sexes also are brought into danger, and will be brought. Nor has

\* The “*Ancillæ quæ ministræ dicebantur*” here were, in all probability, *διάκονοι*. “*Ministra*” is the term applied to Phebe in the Vulgate.



the contagion of this superstition spread through cities only, but through the towns (villages) and open country. It seems that it may be restrained and corrected. It is certain that the almost desolated temples begin to be frequented, and the sacred solemnities, after a long intermission, are revived; and that the victims are every-where bought, for which, before, a buyer was very rarely found; whence it is easy to imagine what a multitude of men might be reclaimed if place were granted for repentance."

They were examined by torture. If threats and persuasions proved ineffectual, the Roman magistrate often had recourse to violence; the scourge and the rack were called in to supply the deficiency of argument, and every art of cruelty was employed to subdue the inflexible spirit of the Christian.\* Pliny's method was like that of Saul; he "compelled them to blaspheme." (*Præterea maledicerent Christo.*)

It is not to be supposed that as many women as men suffered in the persecutions. In the account given by Dionysius to Eusebins of the persecution in Alexandria he speaks of ten men and seven women who suffered martyrdom. Of these he names "that admirable virgin Apollonia, then in advanced age. . . . She appeared at first to shrink a little, but when suffered to go she suddenly sprang into the fire and was consumed." Also "Ammonarium, a holy virgin, who was ingeniously tortured for a very long time by the

\* Gibbon, vol. ii, p. 30.

judge, because she had plainly declared she would utter none of those expressions which he had dictated ; and having made good her promise she was led away. . . . The others were the aged and venerable Mercuria ; Dionysia also, who was the mother of many children, but did not love them more than the Lord. . . . But as to Ammonarium, she, like a chief combatant, received the greatest tortures of all.”\*

We would expect to find some trace of the deaconess in the catacombs of Rome, those subterranean places of refuge, of worship, and communion to which the early Christians resorted, and where so many of them were laid to rest to await the resurrection of the just. The consecrated women of the early Church are mentioned by the Church fathers under the names *διάκονοι*, deaconesses, *viduæ*, widows, or *ancillæ Dei*, handmaids of God.

“There are several of the early Christian inscriptions illustrative of these various classes of consecrated women, of which the following are examples: OC · TA · VI · AE · MA · TRO · NAE · VI · DV · AE · DE · I.—‘To the matron Octavia, a widow of God ;’ HIC QUIESCIT GAVDIOSA  $\overline{CF}$  ANCILLA DEI QVAE VIXIT ANNOS  $\overline{XL}$  ET MEN V—‘Here rests Gaudiosa, a most distinguished woman, a handmaid of God, who lived forty years and five months,’ (A. D. 447) ; IN HOC SEPVLCHRO QUIESCIT PVELLA VIRGO SACRA B · M · ALEX-

\* Euseb., *Eccl. Hist.*, Book vi, c. 41.

ANDRA—‘In this tomb rests a girl, a sacred virgin, Alexandra, well deserving;’ HOC EST SEPULCRVM SANCTAE LVCINAE VIRGINIS—‘This is the sepulcher of the holy virgin Lucina;’ this, however, may not indicate a special class. AESTONIA VIRGO PEREGRINA QVAE VIXIT ANNOS XLI; ET · DS · VIII (sic)—‘Æstonia, a traveling virgin, who lived forty-one years and eight days;’ she was probably a member of a distant church, received on a letter of recommendation; FVRIA HELPHIS (sic) VIRGO DEVOTA—‘Furia Elpis, a consecrated virgin.’ In the fifth century, this consecration sometimes took place at an early age, as the following example, of date A. D. 401: PRIE (sic) IVNIVS PAVSABET (sic) PRAETIOSA ANNORVM PVLLA (sic) VIRGO XII TANTVM ANCILLA DEI ET CHRISTI—“On the day before (the calends of) June Praetiosa went to her rest, a young maiden of only twelve years of age, a handmaid of God and of Christ.”\*

The catechumens were learners, as the word signifies, and were recognized as a distinct class, for whose instruction special provision was made. They were children of believers, born in the Church, and, therefore, peculiarly under its care, and converts won from heathenism, who were ignorant of the principles of Christianity, necessary to be learned before they could receive the sacraments of baptism and the Lord’s

\* Withrow, *Catechisms*, p. 528.

Supper. These converts were held as probationers. The probationary term was not of uniform duration, though the council of Elvira prescribed two years. The instructions, for the most part, consisted of the Holy Scriptures and a formal confession of faith very similar to the Apostles' Creed, and probably that out of which it grew. But at a very early age the catechumens were required to subscribe to the Apostles' Creed before they were admitted to baptism. It is likely that the deaconess of the nineteenth century, who instructs children and young people, teaches them in the same formula which, from the third and fourth centuries, has expressed the true belief of the Church. It is worthy, being a "faithful compend of the apostles' doctrines, and comprehends the leading articles of the faith in the triune God and his revelation, from the creation to the life everlasting, in sublime simplicity, in insurpassable brevity, in the most beautiful order and liturgical solemnity." \*

The bishop himself was the chief catechist, and all the inferior clergy were his assistants. Deaconesses and aged women instructed their own sex, and one of them was always present when the female catechumens were examined by the male catechist.

There is "a chamber in the Catacomb of St. Agnes, which, it is conjectured, was employed for the instruction of the female catechumens. On either side of the doorway are seats or chairs hewn out of the solid

\* Schaff's *Hist. Apost. Church*, p. 568.

tufa, which were probably occupied by the catechist and the presiding deaconess. The low stone bench running around the remaining walls of the chamber would conveniently accommodate the *audientes*, or hearers, as they were called. . . . In some chambers, probably for the male catechumens, there is only one tufa chair, no deaconess being present.” \*

The labors of the deaconess among the sick and poor can hardly be estimated by us, the customs of the age were so different. In the first centuries provision was not made for the poor and unfortunate as now, and a much larger proportion of the poor fell under the care of the Church. This would enhance the labors of the deaconess. The *Apostolical Constitutions* specify as one of the duties of the diaconate, male and female, “to seek out cases of distress,” and large numbers of the suffering poor were thus provided for, and when collected in communities the “widows” and deaconesses cared for the female portion and presided over them.

This would call for many deacons and deaconesses where the Church was large and the number of poor considerable. The Constitutions direct that they shall be “in number according to the largeness of the church, that they may minister to the infirm as workmen that are not ashamed. And let the deaconess be diligent in taking care of the women.” †

We must also bear in mind that charity to the

\* Withrow, *Cat.*, p. 530.

† *Apost. Cons.*, Book iii, c. 19.

poor, and the care of the sick, were very prominent forms of piety in the early centuries of the Christian era. It was not uncommon for converts to Christianity of immense wealth to devote a large portion to the poor. Paula, the friend of Jerome, did this, and not only parted with the splendor of her former life, but devoted herself to nursing the miserable and the sick. In many of the churches only *seven* deacons were allowed, following the example of the church at Jerusalem, but the deficiency was made good by adding to the number of *subdeacons*.

Eusebius, in speaking of the church at Rome, in the middle of the third century, enumerates about a hundred and fifty ministering men of all grades, but says there were "widows with the afflicted and needy more than fifteen hundred, all which the goodness and love of God doth support and nourish."\* We can infer from this that "widows" were in official position, having under them the whole class of sufferers.

We have grounds for a fair estimate of the relative number of deacons and deaconesses in a large congregation in early times. Attached to the mother church in Constantinople were one hundred deacons and forty deaconesses, and to a small church in the suburbs six deaconesses.

Chrysostom, enforcing the duty of benevolence toward the poor, says: "And that thou mayest know

\* Eusebius, Book vi, c. 43.

the inhumanity of the others, when the Church is possessed of a revenue of one of the lowest among the wealthy, and not of the very rich, consider how many widows it succors every day, how many virgins, for, indeed, the list of them hath already reached unto the number of three thousand. Together with these she succors them that dwell in the prison, the sick in the caravansary, the healthy, those that are absent from their home, those that are maimed in their bodies, those that wait upon the altar, and, with respect to food and raiment, them that casually come every day; and her substance is in no respect diminished.”\*

This was said of the church in Antioch, and gives us an idea of the extent of the benevolent work of the early Christians, and the various channels in which their charities flowed to the poor. The church at Antioch must have been a veritable “Kaiserswerth” or “Mildmay” institution, from which issued many streams of healing, support, and comfort for the suffering and unfortunate.

It is thought by some that the deaconess’s institution of modern times is really a new departure, but these statements of Eusebius and Chrysostom would seem to indicate otherwise. When the sick, unfortunate, and needy, coupled with those who cared for them, were numbered in one city by thousands, there must have been a public institution of no mean dimensions, and the work done by the Church in those times

\* Chrysostom, *Hom.* 66.

stands well in comparison with what she now accomplishes.

The growing doctrine of the meritoriousness of good works, and the belief that alms-giving ranked with fasting and prayer as a means of salvation, brought immense sums into the treasury of the Church, and hospitals and kindred institutions arose as the result.\*

It will be readily seen from this that the deacons and deaconesses had a very broad field for their energies, and the Church was not lacking in supplies for distribution. Deacons, deaconesses, widows, and virgins were all more or less connected with the charitable institutions of the Church.

Chevalier Bunsen gives a high estimate of the office in question, and attributes to it the twofold aim of temporal and spiritual help :

“The office of deacon, or helper, implies, in the full sense of the word, the attendance on the poor and the sick, to offer spiritual as well as bodily aid ; and, indeed, to supply all common wants was the individual duty of every Christian, and this divine idea of services of charity had so deeply prevailed the mind of the Church that the office of deacon and deaconess grew out of it. The latter were ordinarily widows, and the sisterhood of widows is nothing more than that of deaconesses.”†

\* Bennett's *Chr. Arch.*, p. 499.

† Bunsen's *Hippol.*, iii, 230. There is a difference of opinion among writers as to the identity of widows and deaconesses.



Of all the writers of the primitive Church, none seem so interested in the order of deaconesses as St. Chrysostom. No less than six appear by name as being on terms of close Christian intimacy with him, some of whom stood by him in his sorrows, when persecuted by his enemies, supported him by their wealth, and even shared his exile. Of one of them, said by some writers to have been his aunt, he writes from exile: "There came also my lady Sabina, the deacon, the same day on which we came there also, broken down indeed and worn out, as being at that age when it is painful to move; youthful, nevertheless, in mind, and feeling nothing of her sufferings, since she said she was ready to go forth even to Scythia, the rumor prevailing that we were to be taken away thither. And she is ready, she says, not to return yet at all, but, wherever we may be, there to tarry. She was received by those of the Church with much zeal and good-will." \*

Three letters were also written to "Amprucla the deacon and those with her" on the general subject of consolation under religious persecution. He praises them for their fidelity, courage, and boldness.

But the most noted of all the deaconesses of the early Church was Olympias, a friend and admirer of Chrysostom. Not less than eighteen letters are addressed by him to "My lady the Deaconess (*διάκονος*) Olympias, most worthy and beloved of God." She

\* Chrysostom's Letter 13 to Olympias.

was descended from a good family, in early life was left an orphan and inherited large wealth.

At an early age she was married, and in less than two years was left a widow. The Emperor Theodosius desired to have her marry one of his own kindred, but her purpose was to devote herself to the Church, seeking for that reward which is gained by an ascetic life. She is described by Sozomen (Book viii, c. ix) as having been, although a young widow, ordained by Nectarius a deacon. Possessing great wealth, she was prodigal in her charities. Drinking in the spirit of her times, she developed that form of piety then so prominent, seen in almsgiving and austere practices. Chrysostom reproved her for her lavish and unwise bestowments, reminding her that, as she had consecrated her wealth to God, she was now only a stewardess of what she possessed.

When Chrysostom was expelled from the episcopate he is represented as going into the baptistery and calling "Olympias, who never departed from the Church, together with Pentadia and Procla, the deaconesses," and exhorted them to fidelity to the Church, and prayed them to yield obedience to whomsoever might be his successor. She shared in the persecution that followed the good bishop's expulsion, and was actually arraigned upon the charge of having set fire to the Church of St. Sophia. Her answer to the charge was a reference to the piety of

her past life, and the spending of her vast fortune for the renewing of God's temples. The charge was dismissed for want of witnesses to sustain it. She was then accused of contumacy in refusing the new bishop's communion, and fined in a large sum, but would not yield, and eventually withdrew from Constantinople to Cyzicum.

Chrysostom writes her as follows :

“For who should tell thy varied, manifold, and many-sided endurance, and what speech should be sufficient for us, what measure for our history, if one should enumerate thy sufferings from thy earliest age until now ; those from members of thy household, those from strangers, those from friends, those from enemies, those from persons connected with thy blood, those from persons in nowise connected with thee, those from men in power, those from the prosperous, those from the rulers, those from the common people, those from men reckoned in the clergy. . . . But if one should turn also to the other forms of this virtue, and should go through no more thy sufferings received from others, but those which thou hast contrived for thyself, what stone, what iron, what adamant shall he not find conquered by thee ? For having received a flesh so tender and delicate, and nourished up in all kinds of luxury, thou hast so conquered it by various sufferings that it lies no better than slain, and thou hast brought upon thyself such a swarm of diseases as to confound the physi-

cian's skill and the power of medicine, . . . and to live in perpetual fellowship with pain."

Her great liberality to various forms of benevolence is thus alluded to :

"Reflect how, from thy first age until the present day, thou hast not ceased to feed Christ when a-hungred, to give him drink when thirsty, to clothe him when naked, to take him in when a stranger, to visit him when sick, to go unto him when bound. Consider the sea of thy charity, which thou hast opened, so that by thy great efforts it hath reached the very ends of the earth. For thy house was not only open to all who came, but every-where, by land and sea, many have enjoyed thy liberality, through thy love of strangers. . . . Be proud (*τρύφα*) and rejoice in the hope of these crowns and these rewards."

This model deaconess of the fourth century practiced austerities and the ascetic spirit in some of its most revolting forms. And even these were virtues in the eyes of Chrysostom :

"For I do not only marvel at the unspeakable coarseness of thy attire, surpassing that of the very beggars ; but above all, at the shapelessness, the carelessness of thy garments, of thy shoes, of thy walk ; all which things are virtue's colors." \*

Palladius, a contemporary, says : "She abstained from animal food, and went for the most part unwashed."

\* Chrysostom's Letter to Olympias.

These quotations are sufficient to show that the diaconate had declined from its original purity and position before the end of the fourth century, and was being buried beneath the false doctrines and practices that arose in those times. These arose, no doubt, from a misconception of the truth. They were, however, a protest against the sins so prevalent in pagan life: gluttony, wine-drinking, unchastity, ostentatious vanities, and turbulent mirth. The Church inculcated the opposites of all these, and the spirit that led to them was killed by abstinence, continence, humble dress, the disuse of ornaments, silence, and meditation. In our times this type of piety produces moral aversion, because it is often cruel and inhuman.

As to the character and work of the early deaconess, enough has been said to show the wide extreme between Phebe, the simple but useful deaconess of the church at Cenchrea, and Olympias, the wealthy, pious, but ascetic deaconess of the church of Constantinople.

## CHAPTER IX.

THE DECLINE AND DISAPPEARANCE OF THE ANCIENT  
ORDER OF DEACONESSSES.

THE accounts given of the ancient order of deaconesses in the writings of the early Church fathers and historians are not very full, and the record is often silent where we would have it speak. Sufficient, however, is said of them, as the preceding pages show, to enable us to trace distinctly their work and influence for more than a thousand years. The records of the early and mediæval Christian times were not favorable to the preservation of minute matters of history. The persecutions to which they were subjected in the earlier centuries, the destructive wars that devastated the lands where Christianity first established itself, and the ignorance of the Middle Ages, have all contributed to destroy the records and limit our knowledge of an order that so long ago became extinct in the organized Church. We gather as much from their enemies as from their friends, and get glimpses of them from measures adopted for their restriction as well as for their support and development. The following remarks are judicious and pertinent:

“Of what the female diaconate did, we know little.

But, knowing so little, it is sufficiently wonderful that we should find traces of its existence, both in the East and West, for from nine to twelve centuries—about two thirds, in fact, of the Christian era. This strange, obscure persistency indicates either that it did far more work than is recorded of it, and lived thereby, or that its title to existence was in itself so unquestionable that even its own impotency barely sufficed to extinguish it.” \*

We may well inquire why or how such an agency for good could perish. It was founded by apostolic order or sanction, was reasonable and natural, and even necessary in order to the highest efficiency of the Christian Church. We must, therefore, look for the cause of its decay and disappearance outside of itself. We do not think the cause is hard to find. The worm that pierced the root of this fair tree, capable of producing so much fruit to the glory of God, was the false ascetic principle which led to the practice of religious celibacy. This was its bane, and under its curse it withered and died.

Unbelief lies at the root of all sin. This was the cause of the decline and corruption of primitive Christianity. Monachism indicates the despair of the leaders of the Church as to the power of Christianity to lift up and regenerate the world. Hence they sought solitude, thinking to avoid the evils that are in the world by fleeing from them. Monachism

\* Ludlow, p. 72.

and its vows are a perversion of nature and religion. "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world." John xvii, 15-18.

Primitive Christianity was eminently social in its character. It consecrated the family life and developed the domestic virtues. Under its influence the marriage tie was strengthened, and declared to be "honorable in all." It purified the home, destroyed concubinage and polygamy. It constructed the family according to God's original intent—one husband for one wife—the best institution to promote happiness and rear children in the fear of God. These points were guarded by apostolic injunction, and in the first centuries of the Christian Church woman was regarded as a "helpmeet for man," and in so far as the Spirit and teachings of Christ and his apostles prevailed she was accorded a position of usefulness and honor, both in the Church and in the family.

The existence of the female diaconate is proof of this. Female deacons were not appointed in the Church of Christ because according to the custom of the times women in general were secluded from society, but just as, in the very nature of the case, woman as well as man has a place in the work of redemp-



tion by Jesus Christ, so should she have a place in the privileges and work of the Church of God. "The scope of the female diaconate in the primitive Church was, as we have seen, to afford a full development to female energies for religious purposes; to associate women, as far as possible, in rank and practice with men, while preserving to each sex its distinct sphere of activity, . . . yet each acting under the inspiration of that Holy Spirit who was invoked alike over the head of deacon and deaconess at their ordination. True in this was the Church to the laws of man's being, as displayed progressively throughout Holy Scripture, from Genesis to Revelation. By a pre-ordained and eternal marriage, man and woman must be one in order to fulfill the great destinies of humanity. Genesis shows us that it is not good for man to be alone, but that woman is made a helpmeet for him. The New Testament discovers to us the deep spiritual ground of this relation by showing us Christ as the Holy Bridegroom of his hallowed bride, the Church. History confirms the lesson from age to age, from country to country, by showing how if you deprive either sex of its free action, of its influence over the other, the result is national sterility, the man a savage, the woman a fool. Restore Eastern women to their rights and the whole Eastern world will rise up new-born." \*

The Church did not obtain the idea of the greater

\* Ludlow, p. 74.

sanctity of a life of celibacy from the teachings of our Lord or the apostles. In some instances, no doubt, passages in St. Paul's writings in which, for special reasons, a single life is recommended, were wrested from their original meaning and made to teach what was foreign to the intent of the apostle, but by no fair interpretation can they be made to approve celibacy for men or women consecrated to the service of God. For the first three centuries of the Christian era there was no enforced celibacy known in the Church of Christ.\* Marriage was regarded as enjoined on bishops, elders, and deacons by the counsel of St. Paul. The inscriptions in the catacombs of Rome bear testimony to the marriage of all orders of the clergy. Bishops, elders, and deacons mourn for departed wives and children. "VICTOR IN PACE FILIVS EPISCOPI VICTORIS CIVITATIS VCRENSIVM—'Victor, in peace, son of Bishop Victor, of the city of the Ucrenses.' Gandentius the presbyter, for himself and his wife Severa, a chaste and most holy woman. Observe also the tender recognition of family ties in the following: 'Once the happy daughter of the presbyter Gabinus, here lies Susanna, joined to her father in peace.'"† These were the centuries when deaconesses were held in high esteem; when the first six books of the *Apostolical Constitutions* were written, enjoining that the deaconess should be "honored," and have a place in

\* Bingham, *Christ. Ant.*

† Withrow, *Catacombs*, p. 525.

the Church, and serve the women as the deacon served the men, and should be ordained in a solemn manner by the imposition of hands. In the fourth century the Church adopted the doctrine of devils spoken of by St. Paul as "forbidding to marry."

The earliest ecclesiastical legislation on the subject was at the Spanish Council of Elvira, A. D. 305, which commanded ecclesiastics who were married to separate from their wives—*abstinere se a conjugibus suis*—thus ruthlessly putting asunder those whom God had joined. The Synod of Ancyra, held ten years later, reversed this decree, and the sixth apostolic canon says, "Let not a bishop, a priest, or a deacon cast off his own wife under pretense of piety; but if he does cast her off let him be suspended. If he go on in it, let him be deprived."

We can trace the conflict of opinions in the writings of the fathers and the enactments of the councils. Not all at once did this pernicious ascetic principle prevail, but it steadily gained in prevalence and power. Thus the Council of Neo-Cesarea, held immediately after that of Ancyra, enjoined in its first canon "the degradation of priests who marry after ordination" (A. D. 314). So the great Council of Nice (A. D. 325) proposed a canon "enjoining continence upon the married clergy;" but the aged Bishop Paphnutius warmly opposed the imposition of such a yoke, and prevailed, so that the proposal fell to the ground. "Marriage is the true chastity," exclaimed

the good old bishop, and in this single sentence uttered a living truth, which, received and held, would have prevented a vast amount of sin and contributed to the purity and prosperity of the Church through all the ages. As time advanced, marriage among "religious persons," or those specially designated to any position in the Church, was more and more held in disrepute, until many of the Church fathers and the higher clergy regarded it as a necessary evil, only to be tolerated for the perpetuation of the race and on account of the infirmity of the weak.

When these sentiments prevailed it was impossible to maintain the order of deaconess. The presence of the deaconess as an officer in the Church could not be tolerated. The opinions of the fathers conflicted with the ordinance of God, and they had found that it was good for man to be alone, although God had declared it otherwise. When the thought was entertained and fully believed that superior sanctity belonged to a single life, and marriage was regarded as a fleshly pollution, it would naturally follow that all aspirants to a holy life must take upon themselves vows of celibacy. The sequence must be the separation of the sexes in monastic institutions. This soon prevailed in the Church. In A. D. 535, by the Justinian code it was ordained in regard to the deaconess, "If she leave the ministry to enter into marriage, or choose any other mode of life, she is subject to the penalty of death, and her property is to be applied to the use

of the Church or convent in which she is; the same penalties being incurred by her husband or seducer, with the exception that his property is to be confiscated for the benefit of the State." \*

Entire freedom from monastic vows is a condition of the greatest efficiency and purity for both men and women, and where these vows exist the familiar mingling of the sexes in the ministrations of religion and Christian activities is well-nigh impossible. "The deaconess should be as free as the deacon himself to leave her home at any time for those ministrations; she should be in constant communication with her brethren of the clergy. But place her under a vow of celibacy, she dare no longer forget herself in the abundance of her zeal; her seeming self-sacrifice is really an enthronement of self; her piety has a personal object, most contrary to active charity; every fellow-man becomes to her a tempter whom she must flee from; an enemy when near; if a brother at all, a brother only when afar off, to be loved when present only when most unlovely or least lawful to be loved, in age or loathsome sickness, or when morally cut off from her by a like vow with her own; by special permission, under jealous restrictions, beneath the Damoclean sword of tremendous penalties; but above all, to be loved when absent, impersonally, in the abstract, with that vague humanitarian love so characteristic at once of effete

\* Ludlow, p. 56.

piety and effete irreligion. Hence the high walls of the nunnery in which, eventually, we find the deaconess confined; hence the vanishing away of her office itself into monachism." \*

When once the deaconess is relegated to the interior of a nunnery her proper work must cease—the two are incompatible. Her name implies helpful service; not a service constrained by monastic vows and terrible penalties. The Greek *διάκονος* has involved in it no idea of slavish servility, but rather refers to an activity allied with regard and desire. "The true and honorable idea" † which it originally implied has never been lost.

The disappearance of the order was very gradual, as we find allusions to them at long intervals of time. Dean Howson thinks that their decline arose from several causes; namely, the general prevalence of infant baptism, by which one of their functions disappeared, sprinkling instead of immersion, the predominance and ambition of the clergy, the superstition associated with the idea of ordination, by which the setting apart of women to parallel official duties would become more and more offensive; but he thinks that the chief stress is to be laid on the progress of conventual monasticism.

The position of woman in the early Church, as illustrated by the fact that many of the handmaids of the Lord "prophesied," which was the same as is now

\* Ludlow, p. 74.

† Buttmann, *Lex.* 40.

called preaching, and by the position of the deaconess, whose office ran parallel to that of the deacon, was more free and more honorable in apostolic times and in the first and second centuries than at a later period. When the religious teachings of the time began to oppress men's consciences with burdens grievous to be borne—when human philosophy became mixed with the principles of the Gospel, and the clergy became arrogant and ambitious—then the operations of the Spirit were restrained, the labors of woman were discountenanced, and her presence in the Church as a minister was offensive. At different times, when there has been a revival of primitive religion, the same phenomena have been seen as in apostolic times, and the Spirit of God has been poured out on women, and they have prophesied to the edification of the Church. But as the idea of clerical exclusiveness has prevailed and prelatical views have been entertained, primitive simplicity has been lost, and in corresponding ratio the labors of females have been forbidden.

## CHAPTER X.

## DEACONESSSES AND SISTERHOODS FUNDAMENTALLY DIFFERENT.

THE organization of the Christian Church in apostolic times was simple, and such officers were appointed as circumstances demanded. There is no evidence that Christ gave definite directions in regard to this, but the apostles and others were left to act according to the exigencies of the times. We would, therefore, look for that organization and the appointment of those officers that would seem most natural and best adapted to the end sought. At a very early period we find the officers designated that have held their name and position through all the centuries, and continue to be known as deacons and presbyters. Acts vi contains the account of the election and ordination of deacons. In Acts xi we read of the elders of the church in Jerusalem, and in Acts xiv, 23, we read of Paul and Barnabas appointing "elders in every church."

The appointment of deacons was a very natural and reasonable transaction, that class of officers being called for by the development of the work, to relieve the apostles of some of the burdens that had fallen upon them, so that they could more continually give



themselves "to prayer and to the ministry of the word." In the same way and for the same reasons the female deacons would be likely to arise, and their appointment would be one of the most natural things that could occur, growing out of the teachings of Christianity, which is the very spirit of benevolence and love toward the sick, unfortunate, and destitute poor.

The Gospel was designed to bring comfort to the disconsolate, healing to the afflicted, the light of knowledge and truth to the ignorant, and the glad tidings of salvation to all. The followers of Christ were surrounded by all classes of suffering and destitute humanity. The Spirit of Christ in his disciples would prompt them to go out after these and administer to their wants, and especially to care for those "who are of the household of faith." "Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality. Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not. Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep." Rom. xii, 13-15. These teachings of Christ and his holy apostles breathed the spirit of hospitality and benevolence toward friend and foe, and would be carried out by the best instrumentalities at hand.

It has been shown that the customs of the age in which Christianity arose and the countries in which it was first promulgated made female agency not only desirable, but absolutely necessary to the spread of the

Gospel among women. In the very nature of the case women must be employed in its holy ministries. The service of woman not being forbidden by Christ or his apostles, and nature and circumstances calling for her Christian activities, what could be more consistent than that there should be an order of deaconesses?

The particular circumstances that called for their appointment are not recorded in the Holy Scripture, as in the case of the seven deacons, yet we know they existed under apostolic sanction and were closely identified with the apostles in their labors.

Their work would be very simple. To instruct the ignorant, relieve the suffering, feed the hungry, bearing to them the alms of the Church. To rescue the degraded, and care for the dying; to do that for which God had specially endowed them, and for their own sex that which man could not do.

The first deaconesses were essentially parochial, attached to a particular church, like the other orders of the clergy. "Phebe our sister" was (*διάκονον*) "a servant of the Church which is at Cenchrea." In this respect she was like the deacon or presbyter. Deaconesses did not live in communities isolated from the world, but moved in an active sphere, and served the Church in instruction and general helpfulness.

They were chosen from among those who had shown themselves faithful and worthy, who answered to the requirements of the apostle: "Grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things." It is probable

that women of somewhat advanced years were usually chosen, yet it is certain that young unmarried women were sometimes appointed. Piety, discretion, and experience were, in any case, the indispensable prerequisites, and only those who had shown themselves faithful in previous trials were admitted.\* In apostolic times some were married, some were not; showing that this was not an essential feature. They were women approved of God and the Church, and were solemnly set apart by the imposition of hands for the service in the sanctuary and among those who needed their ministrations. Had the Church retained the simplicity of the Gospel, the order of deaconesses, pious, active, and free, would have been retained, and sisterhoods bound by burdensome and unnatural vows would have been unknown.

But men have surrounded the work of woman in the Church with difficulty and suspicion. Her loving heart has struggled on against great odds. The struggle began at an early period, as sacerdotalism gained the ascendancy, and her privileges as a minister of Christ began to be restricted. Then under the direction of the higher orders of the clergy she sought in vain in the nunnery the satisfaction and joy which she would have found in free religious activity in the world, guided and encouraged by the Church of God. Let us glance for a moment at the origin of sisterhoods.

\* Bennett, *Christ. Arch.*, p. 368.

The office and work of the deaconess are reasonable and natural. Sisterhoods in their conventual form, with the religious vows of "poverty, chastity, and obedience," are not reasonable or consistent, but are contrary to the highest natural instincts and dictates of reason. They are not demanded by the exigency of the times or the needs of the Church, and are in contravention of the laws of God.

These sisterhoods, or associations of women, in the Roman Catholic and some other Churches, devoted to the attainment of ascetic perfection and to works of charity, and bound together by religious vows, have existed from early times, mention being made of them as early as the fifth century. When these began to flourish the order of deaconesses began to decline. They were encouraged and fostered by the clergy, while deaconesses were more and more restricted. Sisterhoods did not grow out of the female diaconate as much as out of the class known as Church virgins. These were a class of females distinct from the deaconess. They were not ordained to any special functions in the Church service. They are spoken of by St. Paul. Some of the early fathers class the widow and the virgin together as persons who have duties to perform in connection with the Church and as entitled to some support from its revenues, applying to both the words of Paul (1 Tim. v, 10), "to be well reported of for good works," "to lodge strangers," to "wash the saints' feet." It was this class

which in process of time passed into the order of nuns, and for a long time the deaconess and the nun existed side by side; but the nuns grew in number and the deaconesses decreased.

The derivation of the word "nun" seems to show the relation between the virgin and the nun. "Hospinian states it to be an Egyptian term denoting virgin. It is probably derived from a Coptic or Egyptian root. This much is certain, that the term was already used in the time of Jerome."\*

It is not within our scope to trace the increase or development of these sisterhoods. They have continued almost without restriction from the fifth century, when we find mention made of them at Rome, Milan, and other chief cities of the Roman Empire, as giving their time and riches for the relief of suffering poor. At a later period sisterhoods were formed which were not bound by vows of celibacy; they were in all respects comparatively free, as the Béguin Sisterhood. They were widows or unmarried women who, without renouncing the society of men or the business of life, or vowing poverty, perpetual chastity, or absolute obedience, yet led, at their own homes or in common dwellings, a life of prayer, meditation, and labor. "The sisters received, moreover, young girls, chiefly orphans, to educate, went out to nurse and console the sick, to attend death-beds, to wash and lay out the dead, and were called in to pacify family disputes. In short,

\* McClintock and Strong, art. "Nun."

there is perhaps none of the natural diaconal functions of women which they did not fulfill."\* But these and all kindred sisterhoods who retained freedom of action were opposed and overcome by the spirit of Romish monachism that prevailed in the Middle Ages. The more freedom they possessed the more bitter was priestly opposition.

In the early ages the mode of consecration for canonical virgins was as follows: It was usually performed publicly in the church by the bishop or presbyter. When a virgin had signified to the bishop her desire for the usual consecration, she made a public profession of her resolution in the church, and the bishop put upon her the accustomed habit of sacred virgins. This change of habit is frequently mentioned in the ancient councils, but in what it consisted is not plain. "A veil and a purple and gold miter are spoken of; but it is said that they did not use them for any sacrament or mystery, but only as a badge of distinction, and to signify to whose service they belonged." †

Out of this has grown the whole system of sisterhoods, and all the unscriptural ceremonies and doctrines involved in them. The modern practice of the consecration of nuns, the vows they take, and the whole spirit that prompts them are contrary to the spirit of the Gospel. Not that we would ques-

\* Ludlow, p. 118.

† McClintock and Strong, art. "Nun."

tion the sincerity, piety, or usefulness of many of them, but they are misguided; and their piety and zeal are developed in a channel that does not yield the richest harvest of good to the world.

There is a striking contrast between the selection and appointment of the deaconess and the sister or nun. The deaconess is a woman of mature age, having a conscious religious experience, has shown herself faithful in all things, feels called of God to the special work, and is selected by the Church and untrammelled by vows, believing that she is serving Christ in the poorest of his people. The following is a statement of good authority in regard to the nun:

“Dr. De Sanctis, who for many years occupied a high official position at Rome, describes three classes who take the veil: 1. Young girls who become interested in religion, and, blindly following the path of piety, believe the priest’s declamations against conjugal love and domestic affection as unholy, and tending to eradicate the love of Christ. 2. Those who, failing to captivate the regard of men, are yet conscious of an irresistible need of loving some object, and therefore seek to be loved, as they say, by the Lord Jesus Christ, who is represented as a young man of marvelous beauty and most winning look, with a heart shining with love, and seen transparent in his breast.’ 3. Those who, being educated from childhood in the nunnery, remain

there and become nuns without knowing why, and give up with alacrity a world which they have never seen."\*

We think this whole system is destructive rather than promotive of real piety. It is based on the false principle of the meritoriousness of good works, and of the superior sanctity of an unmarried life. It is a vain endeavor to obtain that purity of soul which can only be obtained by faith in the atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ. Herein is the great difference between deaconesses and sisterhoods. It is fundamental; not so much in the work they do as in the motive that prompts them and the end they seek.

In the Church of England several communities of women devoted to works of charity have been organized in recent times. For the most part they grew out of the Tractarian movement led by Dr. E. B. Pusey, Dr. Newman, and other eminent Anglican divines, some of whom became perverts to the Church of Rome. In these Protestants sisterhoods some of the extravagances of the Roman ritual and doctrines are discarded, but the principles that govern them are much the same — an exalted opinion of the merit of good works and their subjective influence on the soul of the person who performs them.

The work of the deaconess is objective rather than subjective. It is a work for Christ in obedience to

\* *Romanism as It Is*, p. 336.



his command; the outflow of the benevolence which he has implanted within. An inquiry made of one of the clergymen of the Church of England in regard to the case in point elicited the following reply: "As to the sisterhoods founded by Dr. Pusey, and the many other sisterhoods in the English Church, they differ very materially from the deaconesses; they are based upon the three 'vows of religion,' poverty, chastity, and obedience. The different orders differ in detail of rule, work, etc., but in principle they are all at one. If I might try to express the difference I think I should say that whereas in the case of deaconesses (that is, the modern type of them derived from Kaiserswerth) the life is adopted as a means to an end—that is, as the best way of carrying out the work—in the case of sisterhoods this is reversed, and the work becomes the means, according to the different vocations, of working out the self-dedication of the vow. People may have different opinions as to which is best; I merely wish to point out that they are two widely different things."\*

Canon Sumner says: "It is surely a great mistake to suppose that nuns and deaconesses are synonymous terms. Convents are ostensibly houses for the sheltering of those who think that they can serve God better by retiring from the world for purposes of meditation and prayer. Deaconess institutions

\* Rev. H. P. Denison, Church of England.

are for those women who desire in a stated, formal, and authorized manner to be set apart for active work in the Church of God. The two are wide as the poles apart, and I would earnestly deprecate any opposition to the work of deaconesses from dread of the gradual introduction of the conventual system." \*

These vows of "poverty, chastity, and obedience," deprive the soul of the highest and purest motive that leads to works of piety and benevolence, which is obedience to the commands of Christ for the love we bear to him as our Redeemer and Saviour. They assume that obedience is hard, and that these austerities must be practiced as the athlete practices abstemiousness and gymnastics to prepare himself for the severe contest that lies before him. This is a misconception of the truth. This highest motive the deaconess has. She is placed under no vow, is free to act under the impulses of the Spirit of Christ, who reigns in the heart. "No vows, no poverty, no monastic obedience," says the founder of the Paris Deaconess Institute. "We took as the ground of our efforts not the pretense of salvation by works, but the duty of witnessing by works our love to Him who came down from heaven to save us." Thus Christ is honored, the holy life is the fruit of a living faith in him, and the works of piety and benevolence are the gracious outflow of a

\* *Deaconesses in Church of England*, p. 32.

consecrated, holy heart, not the hard task performed in fulfillment of a self-imposed vow. The thoughtful reader will see that deaconess institutions base on these principles are apostolic and Protestant.

The Protestant sisterhoods are regarded by many as having a dangerous leaning towards Romanism. The origin of those in the English Church would suggest this thought. They were founded for the most part, if not entirely, by the High Church ritualists. The devotions prescribed for them will indicate the ritualistic tendency of the order and the ground of danger alluded to by Dean Howson in the following quotation :

“It is only when there is some impenetrable mystery in a sisterhood that we are inclined to become indignant. Wherever there is mystery there is suspicion, and to excite even causeless suspicion in controversial times is inexcusable. Moreover, if sisterhoods have their good points, they certainly have their dangers. The *esprit de corps*, unless it is diluted with widely diffused work, may consolidate itself into conventual stiffness. Even religious ritual may become too exclusively absorbing. The relation of the sisters to the chaplain must be a matter of the most critical importance in regard to the formation of religious faith and character. Superstitious notions regarding celibacy may grow up even where there is an express clause in a statute announcing that retirement at any moment is op-

tional. Definitions will not keep every thing safe. Questionable sentiments may become prevalent in a community in spite of rules, and when this is the case questionable doctrine may insensibly associate itself with practices which in themselves are quite innocent." \*

Sisterhoods in England are convents of the English Church, slightly modified nunneries. They are organized primarily for the purpose of forming a religious community where women may find a retreat from the world and spend much time in religious meditation and prayer; while a deaconess institution is a training place for work in the outside world, where human suffering may call for her services. "The sister is of the sisterhood, the deaconess is of the Church."

The difference between the sisterhoods and deaconesses in some of its aspects may thus be summarized. The deaconess of early times had an official position in the Church to which she was ordained by the imposition of hands, and was thus admitted to the ranks of the clergy. The sister formed no part of the clergy, received no imposition of hands, took no part in baptism. The virgin, though special services were held when she received the "habit," was not ordained. The *Apostolical Constitutions* says: "A virgin is not ordained, for we have no such command from the Lord; for this is a state of voluntary trial,

\* Howson, p. 139.

ment for the reproach of marriage, but on account of leisure for piety." \*

The deaconess of the early Church was not bound by vows; only when it was declining, and being, by constraint, merged into the sisterhood, were vows required. At first deaconesses were either married or single; at a later period the Church required that they should be virgins or widows. As the idea of monachism prevailed, the vow of perpetual celibacy was required, and at length, in its decline, death to both parties was the penalty of its violation. Modern deaconesses have no vows, in the monastic sense.

The sisterhoods of the Romish Church are bound by strong vows; and fearful anathemas are pronounced against any person who shall tempt the nuns to break them. "But if any one shall have dared to attempt this, let him be cursed in his house and out of his house, cursed in the city and in the country, cursed in watching and sleeping, cursed in eating and drinking, cursed in walking and sitting; cursed be his flesh and bones; from the sole of his foot to the top of his head let him have no soundness," † etc. Some of the sisterhoods of the English Church also take the three "religious vows."

The deaconess, as the servant of the Church, seeks by her peculiar vocation to witness her love to Christ

\* *Apostolical Constitutions*, Book viii, c. xxiv.

† *Romanism as It Is*, p. 346.

by acts of good-will to men, not as self-discipline, but in the spirit of benevolence, for the glory of God and the good of the race. Not from any supposed merit in good works or superior sanctity in a celibate life, but because in this form she thinks she can best honor God and serve her generation. The chief thought of the "sisters" under vows is, the attainment of perfection by working out the self-dedication which by special and solemn covenant they have taken upon themselves.

The following reasons against vows of celibacy, from a high source, will commend themselves to the thoughtful:

"I should not have felt at liberty to take any part in the arrangements of any sisterhood of which vows of celibacy formed a part, because, first, I see no warrant for them in the word of God, and it would seem to me that to encourage persons to make vows for which there is no distinct promise given that they should be able to keep them would be entangling them in a yoke of danger; secondly, because it seems to me that our Church has certainly discouraged such vows; and thirdly, because it seems to me really to be of the essence of such a religious life that it should be continued not because in a moment of past fervor a vow was made, but because by a continual life of love that life is *again and again* freely offered to that service to which it was originally dedicated. I feel, therefore, that I may venture to say that, instead

of the perpetual vows representing the higher, it is the admission of a lower standard." \*

"Neither should it be supposed that marriage is impossible for a deaconess, if only that marriage 'is *in the Lord,*' and if it should be shown to be so clearly his way for her that in marrying she will have the approval of her own conscience; . . . in such case the deaconess spirit will have but a different sphere for its exercise, for every real deaconess is a deaconess for life." †

With this love reigning in the heart the deaconess has the highest motive to prompt her, and the constant stimulus of a perpetual sacrifice of love and life to God, and, free from vows, she serves him in the joy of perfect freedom.

\* Bishop of Oxford, Church Congress, 1862.

† *Deaconesses in Church of England*, p. 40.

## CHAPTER XI.

## THE FEMALE DIACONATE AND THE ERROR OF THE SPIRITUAL MARRIAGE OF THE INDIVIDUAL WITH CHRIST.

A DANGEROUS error has come down to us from early times that stands closely connected with the consecration of woman to religious service. We mean that of the spiritual marriage of the individual with Christ as seen in the consecration of the nun; and very closely allied to this is the error of the soul's marriage with God, which is found in many mystical writers, and is more Protestant than Roman. This could not arise from any intelligent and proper religious consecration, but from an ignorant and impure perversion of it. This is believed by some to be only second in unscriptural falsehood, in social danger, to Mariolatry itself. This error, like the whole system of female monachism, grew out of the consecration of the Church virgin rather than out of the ordination of the deaconess. But these two are so closely associated in men's thoughts that they are likely to be confounded; and since it has been suggested in connection with modern deaconesses we give it a brief discussion in these pages. From a very early period some women professed virginity, but did not live in



communities, neither were they consecrated by any service or ceremony in the Church. In the third century the Church gave direct sanction to the vow of virginity, and made regulations for the conduct of those who had taken it. It was during the same century that celibates began to live in communities, and from that time onward various orders that sprang from them have been in existence.

In process of time the Church adopted a ritual for the public consecration of the virgin, at first very simple, but later, and at present in the Roman Catholic Church, very complicated and grand. The thought of marriage with Christ finds no support in Scripture only as the whole Church is the bride and Christ the Bridegroom. "The New Testament knows of but one bride—the Church; of but one marriage to the Bridegroom—the wedding of the Lamb, in respect of which every individual member of the Church, considered apart from the body to which he belongs, is but one of those 'friends of the Bridegroom' (John iii, 29)—those children of the bridechamber (Matt. ix, 15; Luke v, 34)—who stand by and hear, and rejoice to hear, the Bridegroom's voice, who have a right, with St. Paul, to be jealous over the bride 'with a godly jealousy,' knowing that she is espoused as a chaste virgin to Christ (2 Cor. xi, 2); or, in a lower type, one of those guests of the wedding (Matt. xxii) gathered in from the highways and byways, and who may be cast out for want of a

wedding garment ; one of those virgins (Matt. xxv), wise or foolish, who have to await the Bridegroom's coming. When once we feel that Christ belongs really to his Church, and to his Church only, we feel also as a usurpation, as a robbery, no less than as an impossible absurdity, the craving to have him each for ourself alone." \* Paul said to the Corinthians, " I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy : for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." 2 Cor. xi, 2. He was here addressing the Corinthian Church collectively, using the marriage relation as a symbol of the sacred bond that exists between Christ and his Church. The Church is the bride, the Lamb's wife. So Rom. vii, 4 : " Ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ, that ye should be married to another." In this passage the word married has been changed by the revisers to *joined*. Here the Church at Rome collectively is addressed, and, by parity of reasoning, the universal Church. There is not the remotest hint that the individual soul can stand in such a relation to Christ as is implied in the figure of marriage.

It is the Church that is the Lamb's bride, and we as members of the visible body of Christ on earth are united to him. " For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office : so we, *being* many, are one body in Christ, and every

\* Ludlow, p. 80.

one members one of another." Rom. xii, 4. The thought of the marriage of the individual with Christ has a tendency to cut off the soul from sympathy with and interest in the universal Church. It lifts the woman above her kind, and puts her in such a relation to Christ, in her own thought, as must conduce to spiritual pride and produce thoughts and aspirations most inimical to purity and spiritual communion with God.

The writings of the Church fathers abound in eulogies of a life of virginity, and often speak of the virgin as espoused to Christ. So Methodius: "For he may fitly be called the side of the Word, even the sevenfold Spirit of truth, according to the prophet; of whom God taking, in the trance of Christ—that is, after his incarnation and passion—prepares a helpmeet for him. I mean the souls which are betrothed and given in marriage to him. . . . For those who are the better, and who embrace the truth more clearly, being delivered from the evils of the flesh, become, on account of their perfect purification and faith, a Church and helpmeet of Christ, betrothed and given in marriage to him as a virgin, according to the apostle, so that receiving the pure and genuine seed of this doctrine, they may co-operate with him, helping in preaching for the salvation of others."\* So these virgins, by their peculiar sanctity and their "espousals to Christ," become a Church within a

\* *Banquet of Ten Virgins*, Dis. iii, c. viii.

Church, and have peculiar privileges accorded them on earth and in heaven.

“ Now it is not that the wing of virginity should, by its own nature, be weighted down upon the earth, but that it should soar upward to heaven to a pure atmosphere, and to the life which is akin to that of angels. Whence also they, first of all, after their call and departure hence, who have rightly and faithfully contended as virgins for Christ, bear away the prize of victory, being crowned by him with the flowers of immortality. For, as soon as their souls have left the world, it is said that the angels meet them with much rejoicing, and conduct them to the very pastures already spoken of, to which also they were longing to come, contemplating them in imagination from afar, when, while they were yet dwelling in their bodies, they appeared to them divine.” \*

At the close of his work Methodius puts into the mouth of Thekla, the chief virgin, these words: “ Leaving marriage and the beds of mortals and my golden home for thee, O King, I have come in undefiled robes, in order that I might enter with thee within thy happy bridal chamber.” And all the other virgins responded in the chorus, “ I keep myself pure for thee, O Bridegroom, and holding a lighted torch I go to meet thee !” †

We also give one illustration from Clement of Rome: “ God, who has declared with his mouth,

\* *Banquet of Ten Virgins*, Dis. viii, c. 2.

† *Ibid.*, Dis. xi, c. 2.

and he does not lie, that it is 'better than sons and daughters,' and that he will give to virgins a notable place in the house of God, which is *something* 'better than sons and daughters,' and better than *the place of* those who have passed a wedded life in sanctity, and whose 'bed has not been defiled.' For God will give to virgins the kingdom of heaven, as to the holy angels, by reason of this great and noble profession." \*

All writers, ancient and modern, who wrote in favor of a monastic life, present this subject of the espousal of the virgin to Christ in a fascinating form, representing that vows of virginity win the special favor of God; that those who adopt them will find a superior place in the Church on earth, and obtain a brighter crown in heaven, and that the virgin's intercourse and communion with Christ is closer and more blessed than that of ordinary mortals. She walks and talks with him, and "enters into the happy bridal chamber." Chrysostom, in his description of one who is "a virgin indeed," says, "For when she walks, it is through a wilderness; if she sits in the church, it is in deepest silence; her eyes see none of those present, women nor men, but the Bridegroom only, as present and appearing. When she enters again her house, she has conversed with him in her prayers, she has heard his

\* Clement of Rome, *Epist.* i, c. iv. Any who wish to pursue this subject further we refer to Clement of Alexandria and Cyprian for what cannot be transcribed here.

voice alone in the Scriptures. And when she is in her home, let her think on the longed-for One alone; let her be a stranger, a sojourner, a wayfarer, let her do all as becometh one strange to all things here below."

The customs and thought of early times have been perpetuated in the Church of Rome. The tremendous upheaval of the Reformation failed to correct the abuses that had found a lodgment in the Church. Protestantism corrected those within her own borders, but went to the other extreme and discarded some things good and worthy. Protestants generally condemn monasticism, as based upon the error of merit in good works and the supposed holiness of a celibate life. Roman Catholic authorities assert the usefulness of monastic orders and extend special privileges to them.

In the consecration of the nun we have the "espousal of the chaste virgin to Christ" in a simple form, very ancient, but, nevertheless, unscriptural and pernicious. In the modern form, more complicated, spectacular, and fascinating to young and enthusiastic minds, but always erroneous and misleading; it is very materialistic in all its bearings. The virgin is espoused to Christ as a woman is espoused to her husband. "The habit, veil, and ring of the candidate are carried to the altar, and she herself is conducted to the bishop, who, after mass and an anthem (the subject of which is that she ought to have her lamp lighted, for the Bridegroom is coming), pronounces the

benediction; then she rises up, and the bishop consecrates the new habit, sprinkling it with holy water. When the candidate has put on her new habit, she presents herself before the bishop, and says, on her knees, '*Ancilla Christi sum*, etc.' ('I am the maid of Christ'); then she receives the veil, and afterward the ring, by which she is married to Christ, and finally the crown of virginity."\*

"The Latin form for the benediction and consecration of virgins occupies twenty-five pages in the *Pontificale Romanum* of 1818. The key of the whole is given in these questions which the mitred dignitary presiding puts to them at the beginning of the service, to be answered affirmatively:

"'Do you wish to persevere in the purpose of holy virginity?

"'Do you promise that you will preserve your virginity forever?

"'Do you wish to be blessed and consecrated and betrothed to our Lord Jesus Christ, the son of the Supreme God?'

"After various genuflections, and prostrations, and chantings, and prayers, and sprinklings with holy water, nuns go up two at a time to the bishop, who puts the veil upon each nun's head, saying:

"'Receive the sacred veil, by which you may be known to have despised the world, and to have truly and humbly, with all the strivings of your heart, sub-

\* McClintock and Strong, art. "Nun."

jected yourself forever as a bride to Jesus Christ, and may he keep you from all evil and bring you through to eternal life.’

“After further chantings and prayer, they go up again in pairs, and the bishop puts a ring on the ring-finger of each nun’s right hand, declaring her espoused to Jesus Christ, upon which the two chant :

“‘I have been betrothed to him whom angels serve, whose beauty sun and moon admire.’

“Afterward each nun has a crown or wreath put on her head by the bishop, with a similar declaration and chanting. Then follow prayers, chanting, and two long nuptial benedictions upon the nuns, who first stand humbly inclined, and then kneel. Then the bishop, sitting upon his seat and wearing his miter,” pronounces terrible anathemas “by the authority of Almighty God, and of his blessed apostles, Peter and Paul,” against any who shall lead off the virgins or religious persons from the divine service to which they have been subjected under the banner of chastity.\*

This, to Protestant eyes, seems like the sinful mingling of carnal and spiritual things, an injustice to men and women, a perversion of nature and religion, an insult to Christ, and to the mind enlightened by spiritual truth, drawn from the word of God, an utter absurdity.

But this error, presented in the specious form to

\* *Romanism as It Is*, p. 345.



which the Roman priesthood is accustomed, is attracting attention even in Protestant countries where many families intrust their daughters to priests and nuns to be educated. "Face the idea in itself," says Ludlow, "and you will see that the worship of Christ as an individual Bridegroom is, in reality, the worship of him not as the representative of humanity, but as a male human being, capable of spiritual polygamy. Many a time have I sickened over the expressions of Romish writers, speaking of nuns as 'the spouses of Christ.' . . . And I know that this foul prurient talk is being dinned into the ears of many and many an English girl by Romanists, conscious or unconscious, open or concealed, then most dangerous when they least mean it, and that many a one already has been prevailed upon to leave father and mother, and friends, and fellow-creatures, and to plunge herself into the depths of a convent in hopes of uniting herself there by the most solemn of marriage vows to a Bridegroom who will never forsake her."

The extent to which this is carried in the sisterhoods of the Church of England is scarcely known beyond their own limits. It is not surprising that many, both in the Church and out of it, have serious apprehensions as to whither it will lead. The idea of personal marriage with Christ is fascinating to many unmarried women who have a genius for religious work and ecclesiastical ceremonies. On the tendencies of the English sisterhoods a recent writer gives

the following testimony : “ The old pernicious, mawkish notion of ‘ professing virginity ’ and becoming ‘ brides of Christ ’ is rife among them. Canon Carter, warden of the ‘ House of Mercy ’ at Clewer, who has been almost as prominent an advocate of sisterhoods as Dean Howson of deaconesses, warmly defends vows as being but the ‘ superadded outward seals of a tie already knitting the soul in union with its Lord, through the willing choice of the virgin or widowed state for his dear sake.’ To depart from such a profession, once made, is deemed a sin. Canon Carter tells of the unspeakable blessing it is to feel ‘ that among the daughters of the Church of England, in all ranks, there are those who are ready to come forth, surrendering earthly love, home, ease, fortune, freedom, as of old, to cast themselves only on the great spiritual mysteries of our faith, to know only what it is to live in and for Christ, cheered and recompensed beyond all earthly expectations or joys by the sense of the mysterious union into which the heavenly Bridegroom has drawn them, betrothing them by a special seal unto himself.’ And it is said that in some sisterhoods ‘ daughters of the Church of England ’ have perpetrated the sacrilegious folly of arraying themselves in bridal attire, their heads adorned with flowing veil and orange blossoms, and of presenting themselves before the altar, there to be wedded with a gold ring to the Saviour of the world ! No wonder that many, even in the English Church,

turn with pain and disgust from such 'religious life!' " \*

This thought is frequently found in the literature of the High Church party in the Anglican communion. Speaking of the celibate state, one writer says: "Blessed, blessed of their Lord, are they (called by whatever name) who abjure things lawful in themselves, and for the kingdom of heaven's sake forsake home, house, and lands, in order to be without carefulness for the things of this world, and to be more devoted to their Lord in the service of his Church and poor, and to be holy both in body and soul; great is their reward now, in this life, and in the world to come.

" 'A virgin priest the altar best attends,  
Our Lord that state commands not, yet commends.' " †

It is well known that Methodism arose among High Church Episcopalians, and this feature of High Church tendency was seen among its founders and promoters. Our early Methodist literature is tinged with it. Wesley says, "I met, in society, the single men, and showed them on how many accounts it was good for those who had received that gift from God to remain single for the kingdom of heaven's sake." ‡ For the society that received these teachings Mr. Wesley prepared a "covenant" to be renewed every year.

\* *Andover Review*, 1888, p. 579.

† *Wesley and High Churchmen*, p. 64.

‡ *Journal*, viii, p. 92.

It contained the following solemn profession, which was to be said aloud, the people kneeling :

“ And since Thou hast appointed the Lord Jesus Christ the only means of coming unto thee, I do here, upon the bended knees of my soul, accept of him as the only new and living way, . . . and do here solemnly join myself in a marriage covenant to him. O blessed Jesus ! I come to thee, . . . a guilty, condemned malefactor, unworthy to wash the feet of the servants of my Lord, much more to be solemnly married to the King of Glory ; but since such is thine unparalleled love, I do here, with all my power, accept thee, and take thee for my Head and Husband, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, for all times and conditions, to love, honor, and obey thee before all others, and this to the death,” etc. “ Amen, so be it ; and the covenant which I have made on earth let it be ratified in heaven.” \*

We find it also in some of the early Methodist hymns :

“ I have no sharer of my heart  
To rob my Saviour of a part  
And desecrate the whole ;  
Only betrothed to Christ am I,  
To wait his coming from the sky,  
To wed my happy soul.”

Wesley expressed his sense of the high estate of those who lived a celibate life for the “ kingdom of heaven’s sake ” in the following lines :

\* *Wesley and High Churchmen*, p. 66.

“Thousands of virgins chaste and clean,  
From Love's pleasing witchcrafts free,  
Fairer than the sons of men,  
Consecrate their hearts to Thee.” \*

The spiritual union existing between the soul of the believer and God through Christ has been misconstrued. In the case of the Church virgin who had resolved on a life of virginity, when she broke her vow and entered the married state it was accounted a monstrous sin and crime, and both the Church and State enacted severe measures for its punishment. In modern times the punishment is ecclesiastical, and the anathemas of the Church are pronounced against all involved in it.

We do not fail to distinguish between the materialistic Romanist error of the marriage of the *woman* with Christ and the spiritual marriage of the *soul* with its Lord, so often found in the writings of the mystics in both prose and poetry, but they are kindred errors, and must be shunned. This thought is often associated with the most fervid forms of devotion, and entertained by the most self-sacrificing and devoted people, but who, carrying the thought to an extreme, have been caught in the snare of “the flesh and the devil.”

Professor F. W. Newman, one of the ablest writers in the English language, thus presents it :

“That none can enter into the kingdom of heaven

\* *Wesley and High Churchmen*, p. 68.

without becoming *a little child*, guileless and simple-minded, is a sentiment long well-known. But behind and after this there is a mystery, revealed to but few, which thou, O Reader, must take to heart. Namely, if thy soul is to go on into higher spiritual blessedness, it must become *a woman*; yes, however manly thou be among men. . . . Spiritual persons have exhausted human relationships in the vain attempt to express their full feeling of what God (or Christ) is to them—Father, Brother, Friend, King, Master, Shepherd, Guide, are common titles. . . . But what has been said will show why a still tenderer tie has ordinarily presented itself to the Christian imagination as a more appropriate metaphor, that of marriage. . . . Those in whom these phenomena have been sharply marked, so as to make a new crisis of the life, seem instinctively to compare the process which they thus undergo to a spiritual marriage.

We have seen the longings of the soul to convert God's transitory visits into an abiding union, and how it is eager above all things to make this union *indissoluble*. On getting a clear perception that it is asking that which he delights to grant, it believes that its prayer is answered. . . . It is therefore very far indeed from a gratuitous phantasy to speak of this as a marriage of the soul to God. No other metaphor, in fact, will express the thing, and it is hard to think that any can have experienced it and not feel the

suitability of the phrase, though (for fear of casting pearls before swine) one must ordinarily avoid any allusion to what is not only a sacred but a momentous transaction." \*

This was written by one who had gone far from the paths of orthodoxy, and whose writings, both brilliant and profound, have had a baneful influence upon the religious thought of the age.

These errors, which are closely associated with the formal consecration of women to the service of Christ in his Church, are not necessary outgrowths of it, but perversions of a legitimate religious act. They come from the idea of the superior holiness of an unmarried life. As most modern deaconess institutions admit only single women, it can readily be seen that caution is necessary.

So long as we abide by the holy Scriptures, and retain the simplicity of the Gospel, we are not in danger of the errors above mentioned. Let the deaconess be separated to the work at her own wish, and by the concurrent action of the Church; let her ordination be simple and devout, by the imposition of the hands of the bishop, with solemn prayer for the endowment of the Holy Ghost for the special work to which she is consecrated. She must be as free as the clergy, with no binding vows or any thing that looks like monasticism. While she may regard an unmarried state as conducive to success in her chosen

\* *The Soul*, p. 54.

field, she must remember it is in no sense essential to her purity of character or her eternal salvation. Her life will then be in accord with sound reason, the highest instincts of human nature, and the benevolence of Christ.

While the primal object of this life of labor is to benefit the poor and win them to Christ, its subjective influence should not be overlooked. Free intercourse with all classes, as a recognized servant of Christ and minister of his Church, will give the mind a broader scope, and the heart a deeper sympathy. The deaconess will make a still greater advance "when our cynical world shall comprehend that it is not for the gratification of passing vanity, or foolish pleasure, or matrimonial ends, that she extends her hand of generous courtesy to man, but that he may be aided by the strength she gives in weakness, encouraged by the smiles she bestows in sympathy, and enlightened by the wisdom she has gained by inspiration." \*

\* *Beacon Lights*, p. 97.



## CHAPTER XII.

## THE DEACONESSES OF KAISERSWERTH.

AT the time of the Reformation the perversion of Christianity was so great, and its forms and methods so corrupt, that a deep prejudice existed against all its institutions. The truth had become so obscured by the traditions of men that it was difficult to separate the wheat from the chaff. It required great powers of discernment to trace back, through the errors of mediæval Christianity, those living germs of truth which had been deposited in the primitive Church by Christ and his apostles. They had been overlaid by human accretions that tended only to vanity and ambition in the clergy, and to spiritual darkness among the masses. It was difficult to find the "virgin," the "widow," or the "deaconess" of the apostolic Church in the nun of the Middle Ages.

Because of the perversion of the original type of deaconess, and the consequent prejudice of the Reformers, some ancient offices and apostolic methods were not readily separated from the corrupt institutions of Romanism, and incorporated in the Church of the Reformation. This was a natural result of

the agitation and confusion of the times. The pendulum having swung so far from the center of truth in the direction of superstition, in its backward sweep passed the line established by the Holy Scriptures, and reached the other extreme. The Reformers had not yet discovered the germ of the female diaconate beneath the perversions of monasticism. "In every place, instead of a hierarchy seeking its righteousness in the works of man, its glory in external pomp, its strength in a material power, the Church of the apostles re-appeared, humble as in primitive times, and, like the ancient Christians, looking for its righteousness, its glory, and its power solely in the blood of the Lamb and in the word of God." \*

Many sporadic efforts were made to revive the diaconate soon after the Reformation, but these stood apart from any general plan and worked under no system.

The church in Wesel, Germany, employed deaconesses as early as 1575. The congregation consisted of Protestant refugees from Holland and elsewhere. One of its first acts was to decide that women were to be officially employed by the presbytery among the poor and sick. The word deaconess was systematically used, and the formal choice of one and another to fill the position is recorded and their names given. The congregation having, for itself, restored the female diaconate, asked the authorities of the Re-

\* D'Aubigné, *Hist. Ref.*, vol. iv, p. 41.

formed Church for approval. The classis decided it should stand until a final decision could be reached, but deferred, action until their next meeting. In 1580 the same classis decided that, "If this office, which had fallen into disuse and decay in the Church of God, is again to be restored, then it shall be established in the same form and with the same character belonging to it, as described by the apostle Paul, namely, widows, and not married women, shall be chosen for that purpose." The matter was referred to the next provincial synod. Accordingly, in due course, it came before the general synod in Middleberg, in 1581, which, unfortunately, decided against it "on account of various inconveniences which might arise out of it, but in times of pestilence and other sicknesses, when any service is required among sick women which would be indelicate to deacons, they ought to attend to this through their wives, or others whose services it may be proper to engage." The congregation in Wesel continued to employ deaconesses until 1610, when all traces of the institution are lost. The principal cause of its disappearance was the failure of authorization by the synod, but Dr. Fliedner assigns also the following reasons (they are four in number): "The introduction of a system of State relief for the poor in place of the free exertions of the Church; the enactment of a new rule that no one but women of sixty years of age should be chosen; the custom of very generally employing married women, and, lastly, the near

approach of the sad calamities of the Thirty Years' War."

There is one singular outburst of female activity in the line of religious ministration in connection with the Reformation in Switzerland. "The nuns of the Vale of St. Catherine, in Thurgovia, deserted by their priests, and excited by some noblemen beyond the Rhine, who styled them in their letters 'chivalrous women of the house of God,' sang mass themselves, and appointed one of their number preacher to the convent."\*

This brings to mind an incident which occurred in Pennsylvania in recent times. A certain Protestant Episcopal Church was without a pastor, and having a lady Sunday-school superintendent who felt the spiritual needs of the children, she thought she could in some sort supply them by reading the Form of Service. She did so, and the parents, hearing of the matter, came to the church to enjoy the services of the female ministrant, until it was crowded, and the lady became frightened at the interest she had aroused. She wrote to the bishop of the diocese for advice, and he answered: "Proceed with your services until I call you to order."

Time, so important an element in all the affairs of men, is not essential to the government of God. "One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." The eternal years be-

\* D'Aubigné, *Hist. Ref.*, vol. iv, p. 372.

long to God and truth. The Reformation had to re-lay the foundations every-where ; the details of the kingdom were to be carried out at a later period. It has taken the Church three hundred years to rise high enough above the mists to see the good and eliminate the evil that was in mediæval Christianity. Some wise and godly men saw that there was a lack of organized female talent in the Protestant Church, but were not able to furnish a remedy for the evil. When the order of deaconesses was proposed the people cried "Popery," and Protestantism has failed to avail itself of the talent of woman and is not as rich in good works as it might have been.

The restoration of the ancient order of deaconesses in the nineteenth century claims our attention. It is difficult to decide from whom the first suggestion came. The honor is claimed by different authors for different persons. It is probable that like conditions of suffering and need produced like impressions on many hearts, and suggested to each the same remedy. As in the case of Sunday-schools—many efforts were made to establish them, yet none became permanent save those of Robert Raikes—so, the first deaconess institution of modern times that became permanent was that of Pastor Fliedner, of Kaiserswerth, and the honor of the restoration of the order belongs to him.

In 1820 Pastor Friedrich Kloenne, on the lower Rhine, published a pamphlet *On the Revival of the*

*Deaconesses of the Ancient Church in our Ladies' Societies.* This suggestion met with the warmest sympathy in the highest circles of both Church and State. Baron von Stein, in a letter to Amalie Sieveking, of Hamburg, wrote on this subject: "In visiting the institutions of the Sisters of Charity I was exceedingly struck by the expression of inward peace, repose, self-denial, and innocent sprightliness of the sisters, and by their kind and benign treatment of the sick intrusted to their care. To such sights a pitiful contrast is offered by the expression of discomfort in young women of the upper and middle classes, not obliged to earn their bread by the work of their hands; fretted by ungratified vanity, mortified by neglect; unmarried and growing old; who on account of pretensions, disregarded in a thousand forms, and on account of their idleness, are conscious of an emptiness and bitterness in their lives which make them unhappy themselves and burdensome to others. The question was natural, Why are there no similar orders to that of the Sisters of Charity in the kindred confessions of Protestants? In many cities we have endowments for similar institutions; there is continual evidence of an active spirit in ladies' societies, etc., but such firm, lasting associations as that of the Sisters of Charity—which includes so much that is excellent—these we lack."\*

The German nobility, and even royalty, were at different times interested in the restoration of the

\* *Phebe, The Deaconess*, A. Spaeth, D.D., p. 10.

deaconess institution, but nothing practical resulted. The pious Count Adalbert von der Recke-Volmerstien began the publication of a periodical in the spring of 1835, *The Deaconess, or Life and Labors of the Handmaids of the Church in Teaching, Training, and in Nursing the Sick*. This never went beyond the first number, but its title indicates the intention of its publisher. The count had for many years contemplated the establishment of a deaconess institution, but never carried it into effect. He prepared a plan which was laid before the Crown-Prince of Prussia, afterward King Frederick William IV., to which the prince replied: "Your ideas upon the revival of the order of deaconesses in our Church have been received by me with real joy. Such a revival has floated before my own mind for years as an ideal to be longed for; one of the many things our Church really needs and lacks, without which her disfigurement is much like that of a human face in which the nose, for example, is missing. I agree particularly in the view that the office ought to be avowedly a church office."\*

The order, however, was not revived or established by nobles or princes, but by a humble, pious pastor of a small church in a country town. As his work has lately come into prominence a brief sketch of him will not be out of place.

Theodore Fliedner, of Kaiserswerth, was born in January, 1800, at Eppstein, a village on the fron-

\* *Phebe, The Deaconess*, A. Spaeth, D.D., p. 12.

tiers of Hesse and Nassau, where his father was pastor of the parish church. He studied at the universities of Giessen and Göttingen and the theological seminary of Herborn; was licensed to preach at the age of twenty, and the next year became pastor of the small church at Kaiserswerth. His salary was to be one hundred and eighty Prussian dollars, but even this the congregation was unable to pay because of the failure of a manufactory in which a large proportion of the population were employed. This failure, and the poverty of the people, constrained the pastor to go upon a collecting tour in the Rhine Province, Holland, and England. "Never did a man begin to ask for help with a heavier heart, nor with worse success, till a brother pastor at Elberfeld took him home to dinner and told him that the three requisites for his work were 'patience, impudence, and a ready tongue;' or, as Dr. Spaeth renders it, 'patience, boldness, and eloquence.' The receipt, to which Fliedner added much prayer and faith, proved so successful that he was spoken of before his death as the most accomplished beggar ever known in Germany. England, America, and many distant regions poured contributions into his treasury, and often his worst necessities were relieved by what seemed almost miraculous unsolicited gifts, which exactly answered the demands upon him."\* By this work, which proved successful in a financial sense, his hori-

\* McClintock & Strong, *Ency.*, art. "Fliedner."



zon was widened by an acquaintance with noble undertakings of every kind in the interest of the kingdom of God. He learned then of "a great number of institutions for the care of body and soul; schools and training institutions; houses for the poor, for orphans, and the sick; prisons and societies for improving the condition of prisoners; and at the same time noticed how all these institutions owed both their existence and support to a living faith in Christ." \*

This last lesson was one of the most important that Pastor Fliedner could have learned for his great life-work. This will place him by the side of George Müller, and other worthies of the modern Church whose faith has wrought wonders in the kingdom of God. In his journey through England he became acquainted with Elizabeth Fry, that noble philanthropist whose labors for the good of prisoners were only second to those of John Howard. This acquaintance led, after his return to Germany, to the examination of the prisons and prisoners in his own neighborhood, which he found in a most wretched condition. Convicts were crowded together in dark, damp, dirty cells or cellars without light or air, and entirely without classification. This he remedied by the organization of the Rhenish-Westphalian Prison Society in 1826. "Seeking a matron for the female wards at Dusseldorf, he found his wife, whose parents refused

\* Fliedner's *Short History*, etc., p. 2.

to let her take the position first offered to her, but approved her acceptance of the young pastor himself, although the second involved all the duties of the first."

In his travels in Holland he found an arrangement among the Mennonites which made a deep impression upon his mind. Deaconesses were chosen by the Church officers to whom the care of poor women was given over. "They visit the huts of poverty, distribute clothing given for this purpose, provide places for girls in service, etc. They labor without salary, as deacons do; they belong to the most respectable families of the congregation, and take upon themselves an occupation demanding so many sacrifices with the greatest readiness. This praiseworthy and Christian system might well be instituted by other confessions. The apostolic Church introduced the office of deaconess, well knowing that masculine attendance could not take the place of their tender womanly feeling and fine feminine tact in alleviating bodily and mental trouble, especially among their own sex." \*

Fliedner's work among the prisoners brought him face to face with the question of the restoration to virtue of discharged female convicts. He began his deaconess work with one of this class, with a single lady to help him, in a small summer-house, with one table, two beds, and two chairs. This summer-house, which still stands in the parochial minister's garden

\* Fliedner, quoted by Dr. Spaeth, p. 13.

at Kaiserswerth, is the true parent-house of all the deaconess institutions of Germany.\* The man of God who was thus moved by the Spirit to this philanthropic work embraced in his faith and love all classes of suffering humanity: the prisoner, the orphan, the destitute, the sick and dying. Few men ever entered upon a work with such small beginnings, that in one life-time issued in such signal success.

As the work extended he found that he must secure help in the line of trained nurses who could care for the sick and dying. The matter was laid before a few friends whom he had interested, and in 1836 the statutes for the deaconess society were drawn up and signed in the house of Count Stolberg in Dusseldorf. The daughter of a physician, Gertrude Reichard, was the first one who promised to become a deaconess; the first of a noble line of consecrated women whose names will live and shine bright in the records of the Church and in the Book of God when the great names of the world shall have been lost in oblivion.

“A house, bought on credit for \$2,300, was opened on the 13th of October, 1836. It was the largest and finest house in Kaiserswerth, the homestead of one of the chief founders of the evangelical congregation. On the 20th the deaconess entered; and the first patient of the first evangelical deaconess’s house was a Roman Catholic servant maid.” † The work had its enemies, as all good things have. The peo-

\* Howson, p. 72.

† Dr. Spaeth, p. 14.

ple of the town opposed it, fearing the place would be depopulated by contagious diseases. The Roman Catholic clergy were its bitterest opponents, and predicted its early overthrow, doing what they could to bring to pass their own predictions. A recent German author says: "Theodore Fliedner, having called to a new life the female diaconate of the apostolic age, naturally provoked the criticism, and especially the unfavorable predictions, of the timid and apathetic ones. His undertaking was indeed a work of faith which must be disapproved by all those who did not stand fully and entirely with him upon the ground of the Gospel. It was especially from Roman Catholic sources that prophecies came of failure and an early end to the enterprise. They were shameless enough to place Fliedner's endeavors on a parallel with those of the Emperor Julian the Apostate, who, said they, 'from a mere desire to make proselytes, and from anger that the Christians alone had charitable institutions, erected hospitals, houses of refuge, and bath-houses on the grandest scale, and endowed them most lavishly. But the root was rotten; after the death of the emperor all these establishments perished. *A like fate we must prophesy for the creations of Mr. Fliedner!*' But it happened as Ezekiel said of the false prophets of his time, 'they have seen vanity and lying divination.' Ezek. xiii, 6. What these enemies predicted in the year 1848 is emphatically disproved by a single glance at the pres-

ent status of our cause. The grain of mustard-seed planted in the parochial garden at Kaiserswerth has grown into a mighty tree, reaching to heaven and extending its branches over the whole earth." \*

Notwithstanding all opposition, it prospered greatly, and in January, 1838, the mother-house was able to send out the first deaconess to the city hospital in Elberfeld.

"For twenty-eight years Fliedner devoted to it his remarkable practical wisdom and indomitable perseverance. He added new buildings, extended his plans of beneficence, undertook long journeys, collected funds, and shaped the whole administration with uncommon insight into human nature, and with deep sympathy for human ills." † Under his management it grew; it had the impulses of spiritual life; the blessing of God was on it, and it possessed adaptation to human needs. "He began his work diffidently, in the place now forever associated with his name, and which became under his hand the center of an influence approaching that of Wesley himself, whose power of endurance, faith, and incessant labor Fliedner rivaled." ‡ In an almost incredibly short space of time the work spread to other cities, and deaconess houses were established

\* *Die Weibliche Diakonie*, by Rev. Thomas Schafer, Stuttgart, 1887, vol. i, p. 227.

† Mrs. C. M. Mead. *Andover Review*, 1888, p. 562.

‡ McClintock and Strong.

in "Paris, Strasburg, Dresden, Breslau, Koenigsberg, and Stettin. The German hospital in London procured deaconesses as early as 1846. Jerusalem, Beyrout, Smyrna, Constantinople, in the East, and Pittsburg, in our own Western land, received their deaconesses, whom Fliedner installed in the places designated. When he celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary of Kaiserswerth in 1861 there were already twenty-seven deaconess houses; and at the time of his death, in 1864, the mother-houses numbered thirty, with sixteen hundred deaconesses (of whom four hundred and twenty-five belonged to Kaiserswerth), having more than four hundred different fields of labor. Meanwhile their number has reached over seven thousand one hundred deaconesses, in fifteen hundred fields of labor, and the annual income of the deaconess work amounts to about \$1,000,000."\* This kind of work can only be made efficient and permanent by the blessing of God, and by placing at its foundation the Gospel of Christ. The patronage of the great and the gifts of the wealthy may be accessories to its success, but only the life that God infuses can carry comfort to the disconsolate or salvation to the sinful. "The little seed planted by Fliedner contained in itself a heavenly life; therefore has it grown to a mighty tree, stretching its branches over sea and land, and affording rest to tens of thousands of

\* Dr. Spaeth, p. 15.

weary and heavy-laden ones, who seek its shadow. He who looks upon this tree with an attentive, thoughtful heart can only say: 'This is the Lord's doing, it is marvelous in our eyes.'"\*

The founder of the institution was a man of calm, strong character, full of energy and devout, abounding in common sense and fertile in resources; not easily turned from his purpose, above the folly of running any risks by worthless imitations of Catholicism, or of rejecting what was good because it was called popery. Dr. Fliedner died at Kaiserswerth October 4, 1864, worn out by journeys in Germany, France, Great Britain, and America, which had brought on disease of the lungs. To the very last of his life he continued, in spite of painful weakness, to exhort those near him to a religious and earnest life, took keen interest in the details of daily work going on around him, and died a day or two after taking the communion with his whole establishment and family, including two sons, whose entrance into the Church he specially rejoiced to see.

The institution at Kaiserswerth now includes,  
 1. The "mother-house" and hospital attached, a dispensary, a chapel, the probationers' house, the "house of evening rest" for aged and infirm deaconesses. 2. A refuge for discharged female convicts. 3. Normal schools or training colleges for school-mistresses and school-masters, and schools for poor chil-

\*Dr. Spaeth, p. 15.

dren. The fiftieth report gives 2,080 as the number of teachers who have been fitted at Kaiserswerth, and adds: "This is a great host who have gone to all the regions of the world, to testify by precept and practice *that for children, rich and poor, the root out of which all genuine character is produced lies hidden in the Gospel.*"\* 4. An insane asylum for Protestant women. 5. A home for invalid women of the Protestant faith. All these are utilized for the training of deaconesses for their varied departments of labor, and some of them were founded with this special object in view. We have not space for an enumeration or description of the large number of branch or affiliated houses, or for the numerous institutions that have taken their rise from Kaiserswerth. They are one in spirit and aim, though they may differ in minor details.

The fundamental features of the institution may be briefly stated. It has for its object the training of Protestant Christian women as deaconesses in the apostolic sense, for the purpose of taking care of the sick, the poor, children, prisoners, released criminals, and all others who need bodily care, spiritual consolation, and direction. The deaconess may labor among all classes, irrespective of creed, but may not attempt to make proselytes to the Protestant faith. The two great departments of work are *nursing* and *teaching*.

\* *Andover Review*, p. 567.



The society is under the supervision of a board of directors, one member of which is a practicing physician. Under it the whole work is carried on by the managers; that is, by the inspector, who is a Protestant clergyman, and the lady superintendent, both of whom are appointed by the board. Under these the mother-house and every branch house has its presiding deaconess, who is called "sister." Thus the whole is divided into a number of independent families, yet all are animated by the same spirit.

The educational qualifications for those who desire to become deaconesses differ, being much higher for those who are to become teachers. But the lowest standard requires that they be able to read well, write, and have some knowledge of arithmetic. The applicant must be at least eighteen, and usually not above forty years of age. She must express her wish in writing to the directors, and send with it a certificate of baptism, a short account of her life, composed by herself, a testimonial of good moral character from her pastor, and a medical certificate of good health. She must have the consent of her parents, if living. None but unmarried women or childless widows of the Protestant faith are eligible, and they must be of earnest Christian character.

Every deaconess must go through a probation of from six to twelve months, and this time can be extended, if it seem desirable, to two or three years. The probationary term is spent in the institution.

The probationer is not raised to the position and office of deaconess unless she is elected by a majority of deaconesses then residing in the house. No vow is taken, but she engages to work for five years, at the end of which period she may or may not renew her engagement. She may return home at any time, or is free to marry.

In her ministrations she is the assistant of the doctor in the bodily needs, and of the clergyman in the spiritual needs of the patient. She performs her services gratuitously, and is provided by the institution with food and clothing and a small sum of money for the purchase of needful articles. They all dress alike, wearing a blue dress and apron and a white cap and collar. They may not accept gifts from patients, but when unable to work, and without means, they are supported by the institution. There is a "House of Evening Rest," where they may retire when no longer able to labor. If gifts are pressed upon them by grateful patients they are sent to the institution to be placed in the Sisters' Box, the contents of which are used for Christmas presents to the sisters or for journeys to benefit their health.

Every deaconess retains her own property, and at death it goes to her legal heirs. She has free intercourse with her relations, and assumes voluntarily the work assigned her by the "mother-house." In case of infectious diseases she is asked whether she is willing to undertake the dangerous work. No instance

of refusal has yet been known. No deaconess is sent to a foreign field without her consent and the consent of her parents.\*

In this great work the founder seems to have been governed by three thoughts: That in establishing the order of deaconesses he was restoring to the Church something which existed in apostolic times; that the female diaconate is required in these days; and that, in order to efficiency, the deaconesses must be trained. On these principles he proceeded. While all the freedom is allowed in the institution which an enlightened Protestant mind would deem essential to right and happiness, it must not be imagined that there is any laxity in discipline or government. Though there are no vows, obedience to the heads of departments is strictly required.

The deaconesses are systematically trained for their work. Of their spiritual or religious training Dean Howson, who visited the institution and investigated for himself, thus speaks: "In the case, for instance, of grievous sickness,' Dr. Fliedner said to us, 'How, unless she is instructed and prepared, can the deaconess administer at night those spiritual drops which are often worth more than a whole sermon?' Though there are beautiful liturgical elements in the public services of the community, the prayers used by the sisters with those among whom they minister are extemporaneous; and for these prayers they are taught

\* Condensed from Mrs. C. M. Mead, and other sources.

that they must prepare themselves, in order that the words may be suitable to each special case. Hence the importance of the early years of residence, involving, as they do, both a training of the character through methodical habits and opportunities of devotion, and a training of the mind by a methodical course of religious teaching.” \*

Besides the ordinary specified times of devotion, they have a “quiet half hour,” when all who are able to do so meet in the chapel for meditation and prayer together but in silence. They have systematic Bible study. The Bible is classified and arranged according to the order of the ecclesiastical year, and according to the spiritual needs of various kinds of characters. The close and discriminating study of the Bible is a distinguishing characteristic of the institution. There are three Bible-classes for the deaconesses held on week-days and one on Sunday.

“They are taught not only to know the Bible themselves, but to teach it to others. What text, or what hymn, would you repeat to a person in such or such a state of mind? What passage will comfort in such a bodily condition? What Scripture will be suitable in this or that time of joy? of trial? of spiritual need? By such questions as these the sisters are taught to administer spiritual truth.” †

On two evenings of the week there are prayer-

\* *Deaconesses, etc.*, p. 79.

† *Andover Review*, 1888, p. 565.

meetings, and there are other occasional opportunities for especial religious instruction.

The discipline, mutual prayer, and study of the word result in a remarkable *esprit de corps* among the members of the community wherever scattered. "We have no vows," said Dr. Fliedner, "and I will have no vows; but a bond of union we must have; and the best bond is the word of God." This is realized in the Bible Manual, which is used by the Kaiserswerth Sisters as their common "daily food" all over the world. "And our second bond," said he, "is singing." Kaiserswerth has its own Book of Sacred Song to aid in binding together those whose fields of labor are widely separated. This makes a strong bond of union between sympathetic Christian hearts. Reading the same precious promises, singing the same hymns of praise, meeting each other at the throne of grace, often at the same hour, and engaged in the same work for one Master, even Christ, forms a bond not easily broken.

We have taken the institution at Kaiserswerth as representative. That is the general type of all others, as it is the parent institution. There are many others on the Continent, but it will not be necessary to notice them in detail, as in principle and practice and in the end sought they are one, though they differ in detail of arrangement and management.

There is one fact in regard to the institution at Strasburg which is worthy of notice. In the Kaisers-

werth establishment, and others, chaplains are appointed by the Church or government and have the general oversight and control. At Strasburg the committee is a more prominent feature of the system, and the lady at the head of the deaconesses, not the chaplain, has the command of the executive. Many of the deaconesses belong to the higher ranks in life. This arrangement, we believe, will commend itself to the American reader as best adapted to the thought and tendency of our times.

The ordination of the deaconess at Kaiserswerth and Strasburg takes place in the chapel of the institution, and by the imposition of hands, with this difference: that in the latter *the two eldest sisters take part in this act*. What led to this practice we do not know, but the matter was discussed at a conference held at Kaiserswerth some years ago, and it was given as the opinion of the conference that it was without precedent in Scripture or the early Church.

Having given, as far as can be ascertained, the form for the ordination of a deaconess in the ancient Church, it may be of interest to give one as used in modern times. Kaiserswerth having sent forth more deaconesses than any other institution, we have selected the form used there, which is a fair type of those used in other churches, and which, in part, were taken from it:

SERVICE FOR THE ORDINATION OF DEACONESSES,  
AS USED AT KAISERSWERTH, PRUSSIA.

HYMN.

O, glorious Prince of Life, defend  
Thy poor house here on earth; extend  
To it thy shielding care, and deign  
That here be never done in vain  
The smallest work of love; and fill  
Each soul with strength to do thy will.

And O, let Mary's spirit blest  
Alike on every Sister rest,  
That they in hope, through grief and pain,  
May bear thy yoke and count it gain;  
And if oppressive it should be,  
Say to their hearts, "Come, follow Me;

For I am with thee—I am He  
Who bore the Cross on Calvary."  
Then with fresh courage we'll arise,  
Pursue our journey to the skies,  
Fight for the home we have in view,  
And, following thee, our foes subdue.

As thou thyself, in days gone by,  
Supported uncomplainingly,  
In silence and in gentleness,  
And in a spirit full of peace,  
For us the yoke of love—impart,  
We pray thee, Lord, to every heart,

That peace which worketh full of love  
And wearies not: grant this, to prove  
That thou art in us and that we  
Even on earth are still with thee.  
O Lord, our Saviour and Defense,  
We seek no earthly recompense.

But be our home thy mercy-seat,  
 And we shall tread with willing feet  
 Our pathway here, and, striving still  
 Our lowly duties to fulfill,  
 Stand waiting for that harvest bright  
 Reserved for those who walk in light.

## ADDRESS.

We are to-day assembled in the presence of our Lord to celebrate a holy solemnity, to make a solemn but joyful covenant. In order fully to understand the deep meaning of this ceremony, let us imagine ourselves standing amongst the first members of the Church of Christ at Jerusalem—that model of all Christian churches upon earth—just founded by the apostles, walking in the fear of the Lord and filled with the consolation of the Holy Ghost.

Here, in this newly planted garden of the Lord, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, were felt those wants and weaknesses which exist everywhere on earth. There were widows and orphans, poor and sick members, who required daily assistance, but whose needs were overlooked for want of regular care. Then the twelve called together the multitude of the disciples and commanded them to choose out seven men of good report, full of the Holy Ghost and of wisdom, to assist the widows and orphans, to take care of the sick and poor, as servants of the Church, or deacons. They then prayed, and laid their hands on them, and ordained them to the office of deacons.



Not long after, the Church in like manner appointed female assistants to provide for the wants of the sick and the poor, as servants of the Church; or deaconesses. The apostle speaks with praise of Phebe as of one in the service of the Corinthian church, who had been a succorer of many, and of himself also. Rom. xvi, 1.

These deaconesses labored after the apostolic times for many centuries profitably in the Church of Christ. Their charity embraced the poor, the sick, prisoners, and children; and in the fourth century forty were active in the church at Constantinople.

To-day these seven women before us desire to be appointed to a similar work of love in the service of the Church as those forty—as Phebe in Cenchrea, as the seven deacons in Jerusalem. They are of good report, as those deacons; they have prayed for the Holy Spirit and the wisdom from above (Acts vi, 3); they hold the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience (1 Tim. iii, 9); for, feeling their own impurity and sinfulness, they have turned with penitence to the Saviour of sinners, and he has made known to them the covenant of grace and purified their hearts by faith. They have also been proved, as St. Paul required of the deacons (1 Tim. iii, 10); they have gone through a long period of probation, that we might see whether they were skillful and unblamable in the service of the sick and poor (1 Tim. iii, 10); they have, under the direction of the superior and the physician, exercised

themselves in the bodily care of the sick and poor, whose servants they are to be ; and under the direction of the clergyman learned to satisfy the spiritual wants of those under their care, as far as is consistent with their office. Whenever they could they have relieved the afflicted and miserable, and have diligently followed every good work. 1 Tim. v, 10.

Having been found worthy to fulfill the duties of deaconess, we will to day, in the name of the Holy Trinity, admit them to this office.

But it is fitting, my dear sisters, that here, in the presence of God and this congregation, the duties to which you are about to devote yourselves should again be laid before you.

You are to be servants of the Church of God, as deaconesses, especially as ministers of her sick and poor, but also, if need be, of prisoners and destitute children ; it will therefore be your duty, according as you shall be specially directed, to serve in a threefold capacity, as

1. Servants of the Lord Jesus.
2. Servants of the sick and poor for Jesus' sake.
3. Servants one to another.

First, as servants of the Lord Jesus. You are not only bound, as every Christian, to live to the honor of God, but you have also made it the special object of your life to serve him with all your powers in the sick and weak members of his body. You are therefore so much the more bound to die to all the

pleasures, honors, riches, and joys of the world; to seek your joy in this service of love through gratitude to Him who took upon him the form of a servant and suffered death for you, even the death of the cross.

You are not to seek for abundant earthly reward in this service; if you have food and raiment you must be therewith content.

You must not seek honor from man; you must go forth unto Jesus, bearing his reproach.

You must not seek earthly pleasure and ease; you must deny yourselves, and take up your cross daily and follow him.

What an honor is yours! You are to minister to him whom it is the highest honor of the holy angels to serve—the King of kings and Lord of lords—to serve him as his handmaid, to wait upon him in his members.

As Mary of Bethany had always before her eyes the one thing needful, and therefore rejoiced to sit at Jesus's feet, but was also ready, when it was permitted her, to wait upon and to anoint him, as she did not shrink from expense, trouble, or the derision of men, so must you always desire, on the one hand, to *hear* Jesus, and on the other to *serve* him with a love which "beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." Then will his glorious promises be yours. He will say to you, "I was naked and ye clothed me; I was sick and ye visited me; I

was in prison and ye came unto me." "Whoso receiveth a little child in my name receiveth me." "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." St. Matt. xxv, 36, 34.

Secondly, as servants of the sick and poor, for Jesus's sake. As St. Paul made himself servant unto all that he might gain the more, so must you be especially servants of the sick and poor, not to obtain praise from them, but out of love and submission to the Lord, whose representatives you are.

Therefore you must not serve them with such indulgence as might strengthen their perverse will, but always with the holy zeal of parental affection, striving to win their souls for the Lord.

Thirdly, as servants one to another. It is your duty, my sisters, when several of you are working together, to show that love which leads us in lowliness of mind to esteem others better than ourselves. Phil. ii, 3. Whosoever will be great among you, let her be the servant of all. If you are one by a living faith in our common Lord and Saviour, you are more nearly related to one another than if you were united by the closest ties of blood. You are acknowledged daughters by the great High-priest, who says to you: "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love another." St. John xiii, 35.

As such Christian servants, it is your duty,

Finally, with childlike obedience to respect the authority of the superiors of the deaconess institution, who are over you in the Lord, and labor among you with parental love.

In the presence of God and this congregation, I now demand of you, Are you determined faithfully to fulfill these duties belonging to the office of a deaconess, in the fear of the Lord, according to his holy word?

¶ *Answer, Yes.*

May Jesus Christ, the Chief Shepherd and Bishop of your souls, seal your profession and vow with his Yea and Amen, and own you forever as his. Amen.

Draw near, and give me and the superior your hands in confirmation of your promise.

¶ *Kneel down.\**

The triune God, God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, bless you, and make you faithful unto death, and give unto you the crown of everlasting life. Amen.

Let us who are here assembled, and desire for these deaconesses salvation and blessing, pray for them. "O come, let us worship and fall down, and kneel before the Lord our Maker."

¶ *The congregation kneel.*

\* The deaconesses are ordained with imposition of hands.

Father of mercy, who hath led these thy servants to thy Son, so that they have given themselves up to him for his own possession, and desire to serve him with all the powers of their body and soul in administering to the sick and poor; we humbly beseech thee, be merciful unto them and direct their hearts into thy love, and into the patient waiting for Christ, that they may live and work in thee and rejoice in thy favor always.

O Lord Jesus, thou merciful High-priest, who hast purchased these souls with thy blood, thine they are; they have devoted themselves to thy service. Enlighten them with the bright beams of thy truth, strengthen the weak by thy power, and give them an abundant measure of thy meekness and humility, that they may acknowledge themselves unprofitable servants before thee, and desire to be and do nothing of themselves, but only to the honor of thy glorious name.

O God the Holy Ghost, thou Spirit of peace, replenish them with thy peace, that they, as thy messengers, may bring peace to the homes and families of the sick, and the circle of sisters; grant that they may be ever adorned "with the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit," and may be so governed by the spirit of obedience toward all their superiors, feeling that in performing their commands they are obeying thee. Heb. xiii, 17; 1 St. Pet. ii. 13; 1 Cor. xiv, 34.

Grant them to know, O triune God, that they serve thee, and not man. Pour out thy peace upon them like a river. Isa. xlviii, 18. Let thy free Spirit sustain them, that they may always feel that it is good for them to be in thy service, and that godliness hath the promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come.

And when duty calls them afar off, go thou with them, as thou didst with Jacob. Keep them by thine angels in all their ways, lest at any time they dash their feet against a stone; lead them with thy fatherly hand, guard them by thy watchful eye, that when they walk through the dark valley they may not fear, and in the hour of death clothe them with the white garments of thy righteousness (Rev. iii, 5), and give them palms of victory in their hands (Rev. vii, 9), and grant unto them the crown of life. Rev. ii, 10. Amen, Amen.

## HYMN II.

BEFORE THE CELEBRATION OF THE HOLY COMMUNION.

Lord, let them of those five be found  
 Who, when they hear the joyful sound  
 Of thy return, shall bear  
 Their shining lamps, and on that morn  
 To greet thy second advent's dawn  
 With joyful hearts prepare.

O Lord, we make our prayer to thee,  
 That faith, and hope, and charity  
 May all their hearts inspire.

O thou, of every light most bright,  
 Before whom darkness turns to light,  
 Quicken each good desire.

Preserve their souls in faithfulness,  
 Come quickly, heal, renew, and bless,  
 Grant that each hour may be  
 So counted, blessed Lord, as thine,  
 That some good deed in each may shine,  
 Each day be given to thee.

#### EXHORTATION.

Ye have now entered as servants of Christ into his vineyard; to you is intrusted the joyful duty of ministering to your Saviour in his sick and weak members. Arise, then, arise, my sisters, gird yourselves as the wise virgins for his service. Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him, with your lamps in your hands. He standeth at the door, and knocketh; in the form, indeed, of a servant, in the sick and miserable around you. Open then unto him (Rev. iii, 19), feed him in the hungry, clothe him in the naked (St. Matt, xxv, 40), receive him in his little ones (St. Matt. xviii, 5), visit him in the prisoners, bind up his wounds in the sick, and accompany him in the dead to his last resting-place.

Yours is a blessed office, but also beset with difficulties. How soon will the hands become weary and the knees feeble. Isa. xxxv, 3. Yet, thanks be to God, ye know the Bridegroom of your souls when he comes to you in other form than that of a servant; ye know



him as the Lord of Glory, who anoints with the oil of gladness of his Holy Spirit. Therefore have ye desired this feast of mercy. Ye say, I have need to be fed of thee, and comest thou to me ?

And lo, he is here, the King of Glory, and saith, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you." Then he, the Bridegroom, standeth in glorious majesty. He desires to adorn you with his wedding garment—to give you himself, and all his divine power, in the communion of his body and blood; and ye have well done that ye are come. All things are ready. Open, then, your hands, your mouth, your heart, and receive of his fullness, grace for grace. St. John i, 16. Yea, taste and see how gracious the Lord is. Blessed is the man that trusteth in him.

During the administration is sung :

O Christ, thou Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world : have mercy upon us. O Christ, thou Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world : have mercy upon us. O Christ, thou Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world : grant us thy peace. Amen.

### THE THANKSGIVING.

#### CONCLUDING HYMN.

Source of all bliss and joy divine,  
My deepest love, O Lord, is thine.  
To feed, to clothe, to solace thee,  
O Saviour, this is granted me.

When in true thankful love we bear  
 The poor man's burden, grief and care,  
 These words to us are sent from thee,  
 Come, O ye blessed, unto me.

All those who little children love,  
 Whose tender hearts with pity move  
 For ev'ry sufferer here below,  
 For the lone captives in their woe ;

Those who behold the poor's sad tears,  
 And still their weeping and their fears,  
 To them a bright reward thou'lt be,  
 A shield, a guard, a panoply.

With heavenly fire then fill each heart  
 O Jesus, and to us impart  
 Still more of love, until it be  
 Our highest, chief felicity,  
 On earth to minister to thee.

Then the blessing is sung :

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of  
 our God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, be  
 with us all. Amen. \*

\* This ordination service is taken from *Sisterhoods and Deaconesses*,  
 by Rev. H. C. Potter, D.D.

## CHAPTER XIII.

## DEACONESSSES IN ENGLAND.

AMONG the earliest efforts made for the restoration of the order of deaconesses, after the Reformation, were those of the Puritans of England. We get some glimpses of the subject in the history of those times. The learned divine, Thomas Cartwright, in a controversy with Archbishop Whitgift, contends that in the early Church there were "two kinds of deacons," some of whom had charge of the "poor strangers, and the poor who were sick." And "those," he says, "St. Paul calleth in one place (Rom. xvi, 1) *deaconesses*, and in another place (1 Tim. v, 10) 'widows.'" On these passages he offers this comment: "As there are poor which are sick in every church, I do not see how a better and more convenient order can be devised for the attendance of them, on their sickness and other infirmities, than this which St. Paul appointeth."

We need not be surprised at finding these early allusions to the female diaconate among the English Puritans. They were closely allied in thought and principle to the Protestants of the Low Countries, and many from England sought refuge among them.

The congregation in Wesel, on the Lower Rhine, employed deaconesses as a part of the regular Church organization, from 1575 to 1610. In the same year, 1575, as appears by the following extract from the "Conclusions" drawn up by Cartwright and Travers, this regulation was passed by an assembly of sixty ministers of the Eastern Counties of England, and remitted for their direction to their several parishes: "Touching *deacons of both sorts, namely, men and women*, the Church shall be admonished what is required by the apostle; and that they are not to choose men of custom or course for their riches, but for their faith, zeal, and integrity; and that the Church is to pray in the meantime to be so directed that they may choose them that are meet. Let the names of those who are thus chosen be published the next Lord's day, and after that, their duties to the Church, and the Church's duty toward them; then let them be received into their office with the general prayers of the whole Church." \* This was an attempt to revive the diaconate in a scriptural form, deacons of both sorts, men and women. After admonition by those in authority, of the kind of person required by the apostle (1 Tim. iii); after prayer for the direction of the Holy Ghost, the Church was to choose them that were meet (Acts vi), and these were to be inducted into office with the prayers of the entire congregation.

\* Neal's *Hist. of the Puritans*, vol. i, c. vi.

The Puritans carried their ideas into Holland, whither they were driven by persecution, having by the Reformation escaped the intolerance of Rome only to fall under that of the Church of England in the time of Henry the Eighth and Queen Elizabeth. We have the following description of the Church of the English Puritans in Amsterdam in a work by Governor Bradford, entitled, *A Dialogue or the Sum of a Conference between Some Young Men, Born in New England, and Sundry Ancient Men, that Came out of Holland and Old England* : \*

“ *Young Men.* But before we end this matter we desire you would say something of those two Churches that were so long in exile, of whose guides we have already heard.

“ *Ancient Men.* At Amsterdam, before their division and breach, they were about three hundred communicants, and they had for their pastor and teacher those two eminent men before named (Smith and Robinson), and in our time four grave men for ruling elders, and three able and godly men for deacons, one ancient widow for a deaconess who did them much service for many years, though she was sixty years of age when chosen. She honored her place, and was an ornament to the congregation. She usually sat in a convenient place in the congregation, with a little birchen rod in her hand, and kept little children in great awe from disturbing the congregation. She

\* Written in 1648.

did frequently visit the sick and weak, especially women, and as there was need called out maids and young women to watch and do them other helps as their necessity did require; and if they were poor she would gather relief for them of those who were able, or acquaint the deacons, and she was obeyed as a mother in Israel and an officer of Christ." \*

All efforts made to restore the order of deaconesses prior to the nineteenth century, though accomplishing some good, gave it no permanency. Prejudices against female ordination or appointment to specific religious functions were too strong, and the supposed resemblance of the female diaconate to the institutions of popery prevented its establishment. We must not suppose that the Church did none of the work which deaconesses were assigned to do. No century of the Christian era ever did so much to mitigate human suffering or elevate mankind as the past century. Neither must we suppose that individual Protestant women have not made themselves felt in the distinctive fields generally allotted to deaconesses. They have done much, but without organization or recognition by the Church. The Christian impulse has sent them forth to comfort the afflicted, teach the ignorant, and raise the fallen.

Elizabeth Fry, whose name will never be forgotten, was a deaconess indeed, in spirit and labor, recognized by Christ and the world. She bore not the

\* Young's *Chronicles of the Pilgrim Fathers*, p. 455.

name, but to the poor, the suffering, the prisoner, she performed the offices. The early deaconesses visited the prisoners, and preached to them the word of life. So did Elizabeth Fry. She was pre-eminently the prisoner's friend, a noble, godly woman, a Christian philanthropist, an honor to her sex, and a benefactor to her race. The poet might have said of her as truthfully as of Howard :

“ The spirits of the just,  
When first arrayed in Virtue's purest robe  
They saw *him*, Howard, traversing the globe,  
Mistook a mortal for an angel guest,  
And asked what seraph foot the earth impressed.  
Onward he moves ; disease and death retire,  
And murmuring demons hate him and admire.”

Mary Fletcher among the Methodists, and Hannah More among the Episcopalians, were pioneers in house-to-house visitation, in the establishment of schools for the education of the lower classes, and in imparting religious knowledge. This is kindred work to that done by deaconesses, though the title was not worn by them.

Germany was indebted to England for the initial impulse given Fliedner's work through Mrs. Fry, whose labors among female convicts revealed to the German pastor the needs of his own countrywomen of the same class, and suggested the possibility of reforming the characters of many, and lessening the sorrows of all. She has paid her indebtedness with large interest by giving back to England the train-

ing, experience, and principles of her institutions, in the persons of Florence Nightingale and Agnes Jones, whose names will add luster to England's philanthropy as long as her history is known.

From childhood Florence Nightingale had known something of Fliedner's work, by one of his reports which had by chance fallen into her hands. Grand results are often born of trivial circumstances—incidents insignificant in themselves, but behind which is a providence guided by Infinite Wisdom. From that time she longed to fit herself for a nurse. In 1851 she went to Kaiserswerth for the first time. She twice became an inmate of the institution, and having received its training went forth upon her beneficent career. She brought to her work great nobility of character, social influence, intellectual ability, a genius for organization and execution of plans, and a heart in full sympathy with human suffering. At the time of the Crimean War, with a small band of nurses, she went to Turkey and the Crimea, and effected a reformation in the sanitary condition of the British army. She worked with a devotion, endurance and success, that won the admiration of the Christian world. In connection with reports on the sanitary condition of the army in India, she contributed some of the most remarkable and valuable public papers ever written. Her actual work among the sick is but a small part of what she has done. The influence of her example, her voice, and pen, in



arousing the English people, cannot be overestimated. The noble work which she inaugurated is still going on, in the institute for training, sustenance, and protection of nurses and hospital attendants, raised to testify a nation's gratitude and obligation to her persevering industry and untiring energy.

In this connection we mention one more of England's refined and wealthy daughters, who obtained her training at Kaiserswerth, then returned home to perform such labors, and wield such an influence, as have made her name immortal; and finally, to lay down her life for the welfare of others. She died a martyr to her zeal in the cause of suffering humanity. We have reference to Agnes Jones, whom Florence Nightingale has styled "the pioneer of work-house nursing." She was a devoted young lady of Christ-like spirit, whose chief joy was in mitigating the sorrows and miseries of the poor.

A few lines from her journal will show the spirit with which she sought the deaconess institution. "When, this time two years ago, I left Kaiserswerth my wish and prayer were that I might sometime return there to be fitted and trained for active work in my Master's service. How often since have that wish and prayer been breathed!"

Her prayer was answered. She returned and labored side by side with other deaconesses, doing the most menial offices. She afterward spent one year in a hospital under the direction of Miss Nightingale to

prepare herself to take charge of the nurses in the Liverpool workhouse.

Three years were passed in this position, winning the love of the poor sufferers, who spoke of her as "the lady;" leading many of them to Christ. Then the Master called her from labor to reward. An infectious fever, contracted in the discharge of duty, was the messenger he sent. A nurse bending over her, as the final scene was drawing to a close, witnessing her sufferings, said, "You will soon be with Jesus." "I shall be better there," she answered; and with the words her soul went home to eternal felicity.

The labors of these two women taught the English people the necessity and importance of special training for that kind of work, and their devotion was an inspiration. The deaconess work received a new impetus. This could not be otherwise when those engaged in it "recorded the death of one of their bravest and best, and turned their 'in memoriam' into a battle-cry to call more laborers into the vineyard, closing their notice of her life with the appeal:

" 'The Son of God goes forth to war;  
Who follows in his train?'

O daughters of God, are there so few to answer?" \*

Much of this labor is done in England by the various sisterhoods that have some connection with the Anglican Church; many of them are presided over by clergymen, and are under the supervision of the

\* *Una and her Paupers.*

bishop within whose diocese they are located. Their exact relation to the Church is not defined, and is a matter of controversy among themselves. The first of these was founded in 1847, by Dr. Pusey, at Park Village, Regent's Park, and was formed of a small body of women desirous of living together under religious rule. The next was formed by Miss Lydia Sellon at Plymouth. This institution became notorious for its Romish practices, and called forth many severe criticisms by its absurd and cruel penances. There is no doubt but impulses of piety and charity led to its foundation, and many acts of devotion and self-sacrifice to the cause of God and humanity characterized the "sisters." But in a very short time the whole spirit and tendency of the institution were Romish. The outward symbols and practices were of such character as to justify the criticisms passed upon it.

In England the terms "sister" and "deaconess" are not quite synonymous, as they are in Protestant countries on the Continent. The Protestant "sisters" of England are never called "deaconesses" although the converse is sometimes true. The term deaconess is never applied but to those who render spiritual as well as temporal aid.

To show briefly the attitude of these sisterhoods toward the Church, and their positive tendency to Romanism, we quote a paragraph from a recent writer: "Of English sisterhoods Perry's *History of the English Church* says: 'There are now (1886)

twenty-four sisterhoods of religious communities, most of them with many branches for carrying on religious work.' They do many deeds of beneficence, yet they are looked upon with distrust by numbers even in the Anglican Church itself. And this cannot cause surprise when it is known that penance, confession, and the taking of the three vows are not only allowed, but also advocated by many, if not most of them. . . . It was a healthy Christian spirit which prompted Agnes Jones to say: 'I have no sympathy with the High Church party, and so should not enter a sisterhood even were I free . . . from home ties.' And again, when Miss Nightingale urged her to take a year's training in a London hospital, she wrote, in regard to going to one of two which had been suggested: 'If ever I contemplated the first . . . it was at an end when I found I must become a sister to do so.'"\*

It is a significant fact that the sisterhoods are far more popular in England than the deaconess institutions, and this shows the tendencies of the Church toward the principles and practices of Romanism. The sisterhood itself is sought, and not the work that can be accomplished by the organization. "The sisterhood exists primarily for the sake of forming a religious community, but deaconesses live together for the sake of the work itself, attracted to deaconess homes by the want which in most populous towns is calling

\* *Andover Review*, 1888, p. 580.

loudly for assistance, and with the view of being trained therein for spiritual and temporal usefulness among the poor." \*

The Rev. H. P. Denison, nephew and curate of Archdeacon Denison, says, in a letter to Mr. James Ponsford, of Cheddar, England: "Among us the deaconess form of life has never been a very great success. Many of the bishops have tried to give it life, and there are now deaconess institutions on the Kaiserswerth model, but they are comparatively few and insignificant. On the other hand, the sisterhoods are become a thoroughly established institution and flourish and increase." † With this we leave the sisterhoods, as outside the scope of our work and fundamentally different in character from deaconesses.

The first deaconess institution in England was that formed in 1861 in North London, and now called the London Diocesan Deaconess Institution. It was founded upon the Kaiserswerth model, and adopted a modification of its dress. It put itself in connection with the parent institution, and was looked upon as the London mother-house. It was also represented at the conferences, applied to them for information on important points of detail, and was presided over for some time by one who had seen and known the work at Kaiserswerth. But since its early history the opinions and spirit of its leaders have changed, and Kaiserswerth is not now recognized as possessing a

\* Anglican deaconesses.

† Used by permission.

true scriptural diaconate. Prelatical assumptions have taken the place of Christian fraternity, and the organization from which the London deaconess institution caught its first enthusiasm is ignored.

The female diaconate has been revived at Kaiserswerth; from that source and center the work has spread, and what there is of it in the world to-day has come from the institution planted by Fliedner, as much as modern Sunday-schools have come from the work of Robert Raikes. But some English churchmen deny the claim of Kaiserswerth to a true diaconate; German deaconesses are not in the "succession," those of England are.

"In 1861, after being held in abeyance for one thousand years, the ancient order was at last 'revived' in the person of Catherine Elizabeth Ferard, invested duly with the office of deaconess by Bishop Tait of London."\* Poor Pastor Fliedner! After having established an institution in Prussia that has sent its branches to all parts of the world, its deaconesses being numbered by thousands, its work the admiration of mankind, is lost sight of, or remembered only to be aspersed. In the convocation of 1862, one speaker said, "The title of deaconess has been dragged in the mud; it has been assumed by women, as at Kaiserswerth and Strasburg and in other places, who repudiate the Catholic system of orders." Now the title has been taken out of "the mud," and the order,

\* Hook's *Church Dictionary*.

after being in abeyance for "one thousand years," has been "revived" by the imposition of hands, in the ordination of a deaconess by Bishop Tait of London, afterward Archbishop of Canterbury. This is an assumption dishonorable to the English hierarchy, and offensive to the greater part of intelligent Christendom. Fliedner's name, connected with the order of deaconesses and its revival in modern times, will shine brightly when that of Bishop Tait is lost in oblivion.

It is but just, however, to say that these views are not held by all English Church people. The work of Pastor Fliedner is acknowledged and appreciated by many. Such views as those quoted above were not held by Dean Howson and his co-workers in reviving the ancient female diaconate. In a work now before us, entitled *Deaconesses in the Church of England*, written by a deaconess and having a prefatory note from the Archbishop of Canterbury, is this acknowledgment: "It was not until about forty-three years ago, at which time Pastor Fliedner commenced, in a very small way at first, the now noble institution at Kaiserswerth, that any attempt was made to restore the old apostolic order of deaconesses."

Some advocates of deaconess institutions in England were able to rise above party considerations and plead for them for their own sake, and for the sake of the field of usefulness they would offer for the thousands of English Christian women who fail to enter the

Lord's vineyard "because no man hath hired them." What a responsibility rests on those men of whom it can be said, "Ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered," and on those who fail to open the door where multitudes stand waiting to enter for consecration and labor.

At a diocesan conference held at Winchester, Canon Sumner read a paper, in which he said: "I am perfectly aware—no one more so—by practical personal experience, that from the many thousand parsonages and squires' houses throughout the length and breadth of the land a band of ministering servants of the Lord daily go forth on their holy mission of love. I desire in no way to disparage their services nor to supersede them; but there are women who have no special domestic ties to prevent their self-dedication; there are some who desire to give themselves up more wholly to the work than it is possible to do amidst the various details of ordinary home life, and it is for these that I plead, that they may find a recognized place of work, and may become under episcopal supervision a part of the authorized spiritual machinery of the diocese. Can we not, on such a question as this, rise above party? It is no party question. Institutions which have found advocates in Fliedner, Arnold, Howson, Pennefather, need certainly not be suspected of necessarily leading to Rome. Why may not we meet on the one common ground of Church principles, and strive, as far as we can, at



any rate in the diocese in which through God's providence our own lot in life is cast, to restore to its rightful position the authorized ministry of deaconesses in the Church of England?"

The official Year-Book of the Church of England for the year 1888 gives a list of eight deaconess institutions which are diocesan organizations, having the sanction of the bishops, and under clerical supervision. The following are the dioceses to which they belong, and the post-towns where they are located:

DI OCESSES.	POST-TOWNS.
Canterbury.	Maidstone.
Chester.	Chester.
Ely.	Bedford.
London.	London.
Salisbury.	Salisbury.
Winchester.	Farnham.
Rochester.	Clapham Park.

These institutions are doing much good, but are not as prosperous as is desired. They are brought in contrast with the sisterhoods which are fostered by the High Church party, and, having none of the attractions of doctrine or ceremony which are supposed to draw candidates, are left without the encouragement which they deserve. Cut off from the institutions of the Continent by Anglican exclusiveness they have lost the enthusiasm essential to success.

There are other institutions in England more liberal in organization, having a broader sweep of vision, untrammelled by any restricted views of apostolic

succession, who have only the glory of God and the good of men in view, and who welcome light from all sources, recognizing the good in all. Such is the institution at Mildmay, more prosperous than any kindred institution in England.

The Rev. William Pennefather, a pastor in the English Church, instituted conferences of Christian workers in a truly catholic spirit, "to bring into closer social communion the members of various Churches, as children of the same Father, animated by the same life, and heirs together of the same glory." \* His views in regard to the employment of women in religious work are set forth by him in a letter to Rev. H. C. Potter, D.D., of New York :

"The subject of woman's work in the Lord's vineyard has for many years occupied my thoughts, and we have had for upward of eleven years (written in 1871) a home, into which we have received ladies of whose piety and earnest zeal we have been assured. . . . I do not think the importance of employing pious and intelligent women in direct work for our Lord and Master can be overestimated. It is evident that in our Lord's life-time such ministered unto him, and that in the very early days of Christianity their labors tended to the furtherance of the Gospel. All false religions tend to degrade woman. The Gospel of God's grace raises her to her original position as a real help to the other sex. God sends *man*

\* *Life and Letters of Rev. W. Pennefather*, p. 305.

*and woman* out into his vineyard, hand in hand, to labor in the blessed work of binding up the broken in heart, and it seems to me that it requires the strength of the one and the skillfulness of the other to effect the work. In our divine Master (the perfect One) there were united the perfections of the one and the other."\*

The Mildmay work was organized by Rev. W. Pennefather at Barnet in 1860 upon a very modest scale. In 1864 it was transferred to Mildmay when he became pastor in that place. It is characterized by great freedom and simplicity, and while in its general spirit it follows the Kaiserswerth model, in its details it has marked elasticity and adaptation to the work to which the deaconesses have addressed themselves.

The Mildmay institution comprises at present (1888) three main departments: a deaconess house, a nursing house, and a training house for home and foreign missionaries. The deaconess house will claim our chief attention. It will be impossible to give in the space that can be devoted to this institution any thing more than a bare outline of the work that is there done, and yet to omit all detail would prevent giving such information as we desire our readers to have.

The Central Deaconess House and the Conference Hall form one large building. The latter will seat an audience of two thousand five hundred people, and is

\* *Sisterhoods and Deaconesses*, by H. C. Potter, D.D., p. 89.

used for the large conferences of Christian workers so often convened. The Central Deaconess House is the busy hive whence so many laborers issue, for woman in this case "goeth forth to work until the evening," or rather until the night, as very much of the deaconess work among the poor must be done in the evening.

As a rule every deaconess is expected to come from her post of labor to the comparatively pure air of Mildmay to sleep, for the morning and evening meal, and also for luncheon, if within reach. While great simplicity is observed, both of dress and accommodation, there is a studied brightness in the furnishing and decoration of their rooms. The deaconesses' sitting-room is an immense apartment, with windows along one side, hung with curtains. Easy chairs, sofas, small tables, pictures, illuminations, and flowers abound; every thing that can give an air of home comfort to eyes wearied with squalor and misery. Below this is a room known as "No. 6," where all house meetings are held. The dining-room is in the basement. There are also many other rooms in that department that are constantly in use: the invalid kitchen, a sort of meat and soup dispensary for the poor; the orphan school-room; the Dorcas room, where some of the deaconesses are employed in cutting out clothing or superintending the aged widows' sewing-class. These widows receive pay for their work, while the clothing they make is given to the poor.

Near at hand is the flower mission room, in charge of a deaconess, where about two thousand bunches of flowers are made up every week, in summer time. Each is adorned with a bright-colored text, then taken to the hospitals and workhouse infirmaries. In the winter months all these rooms are crowded, three evenings in the week, with men's night-schools, which have no rivals in England. The number of names on the books exceeds twelve hundred. These are taught by deaconesses. The Bible is read on two evenings, a scriptural address is given on the other, and the schools always close with singing and prayer. A circulating library is also attached. The night-school exerts a great influence for good. Many of the men pass from it to the Sunday Bible classes. There are Bible classes for men, women, and children, for ladies, for young men, for girls of different ages and ranks, and for servants. Many of these are conducted by deaconesses.

So far, as to the Central Deaconess House, it should be added that, in addition, there are a large number of probationers and embryo deaconesses yet under training. "Fresh candidates applying for admission to the deaconess work, and judged in any degree suitable by Mrs. Pennefather, in point of health, gifts, etc., are sent for one month 'on trial' to the Probation House. At the month's end, if accepted, the elder candidates are received into the Center House, while the younger ones are drafted on

to the Training Home. Here they remain for a year, eighteen months, or two years, as may seem desirable, being trained in the practical knowledge of all branches of domestic management—cooking, laundry work, book-keeping, cutting out clothing, etc. When the period, long or short, of training has expired, the workers are passed on to the Center House at Mildmay, or to the South Deaconess House at Brixton, and at once take their place in the ranks, commencing work at one or other of the outlying missions.”

Thus far we have spoken of the mission deaconesses; but there are also one hundred “Nursing Sisters,” nurses and probationers who have a Nursing House presided over by a lady superintendent of their own. Comparatively few of these are off duty and at home at any one time. In addition to a great deal of private nursing all over the kingdom and on the Continent, there is an infirmary at Doncaster, a medical station at Malta, and a medical mission and hospital at Jaffa, all nursed by Mildmay “sisters,” as well as a hospital at Bethnal Green, and the cottage hospital at Mildmay. In connection with these is a convalescent home at Brighton, a home for invalid ladies, an infirmary on Newington Green, and an orphanage and servants’ registry and home.

Most that has been said is in regard to the work grouped around the Center House at Mildmay Park, but the greater part of the deaconess work is done

in the outlying districts, among the suffering poor in the crowded parts of "outcast London." There are twenty-one of these districts now worked by the deaconesses. Many instances of conversion occur under their labors in the hospitals, in the schools, and at the homes of the people. One man at the hospital, who has emigrated, was an avowed infidel when he became a patient. After some time he observed to the nurse that, whether the things he heard of were true or not, she at any rate must believe them or she would not do the work she did. He was a very thoughtful and intelligent man, and though when he first came he would not even take a Bible in his hands, and turned his back on others who were at prayer, he now began to read the once hated book for himself. Even before he left the hospital the change in him was so great as to be apparent to every one, and while in the convalescent home at Barnet he entered into the inward life and peace which he had formerly despised.

This instance is one of thousands. At the mission houses in the outlying districts all sorts of meetings are held. We give a list of those at Bethnal Green as a fair sample of all, though the rules are flexible and can be adapted to the wants of the people: On Sunday there is a morning Bible-class, an afternoon school, and an evening evangelistic service; on Monday afternoon, a mothers' meeting, and at night a temperance meeting; on Tuesday evening a class for little boys, and a sewing class for girls under four-

teen ; on Wednesday afternoon a women's reading class, and at night a Bible class ; on Thursday, classes for little girls and for girls over fourteen. Classes for men and social evenings for youths take place every night except Monday and Saturday. Children's services are also held, attended, on an average, by one hundred girls and about seventy boys. Twice a week thronged "dinner" prove the need which the poor little wanderers of the streets have for warmth and food. The average attendance at the girls' sewing-class is about thirty, and includes some of the roughest girls in the neighborhood, attracted, perhaps, by the sound of music, or a present of flowers, or the prospect of a summer treat.

It is almost impossible to tabulate or give a summary of the work done. At the meetings held in 1887 by the deaconesses, an average of more than nine thousand each week attended in the winter, somewhat less in summer. The flower mission sent out to infirmaries, hospitals, and to the sick and poor 37,125 of its bright tokens of sympathy and kindness, each accompanied by some message from God's word. In very many cases we know that these have been followed by his blessing ; and we trust that eternity will unfold countless other instances, undreamed of now, of sad hearts comforted, and dying eyes turned to a Saviour by these sweet silent messengers.

One deaconess, who lives at the Nursing House and works permanently among the sick and poor of the



district, made seventeen hundred visits during the year. In the medical department of the institution the figures represent more than 9,000 attendances at the medical mission, and about 15,000 visits by doctors and deaconesses to the sick in their own homes.

Two other medical missions were opened in 1888, and have already been attended by large numbers of patients. Thirty-six girls are in the orphanage; the home and registry has given temporary shelter to two hundred and sixty. One thousand two hundred and sixty-seven applicants, ranging from governesses and matrons down to little maids-of-all-work, have been placed in situations, and ninety others provided with temporary employment. In the "Haven," the little refuge in the borough where the rescue work is chiefly carried on, two hundred and five girls and women have been received during the period under review; some requiring only temporary shelter, advice, and assistance, but by far the larger number being cases of real "rescue" from a life of shame. Some of these have been sent to other homes, some restored to friends, placed in situations, or sent abroad; and all lovingly directed to a Saviour whom, we trust, many of them have sought and found.

The above is condensed from two small tracts, *Mildmay Deaconesses and their Work*, and *A Retrospect of Mildmay Work during the year 1887*. A spirit of devotion to Christ and his work breathes through the whole, and impresses one that the Spirit

that moves the Mildmay Mission is the spirit of heaven. The last-named tract, which is officially published, closes with the following paragraph :

“It may be that in the pressure of our busy life at Mildmay we have sometimes seemed lacking in the grace of gratitude; but we rejoice to know that our King overlooks nothing that is done for him. We have it on his own authority that even a cup of cold water given for his sake shall in no wise lose its reward; and to him we commend all who have made us the channels of their service to his poor. From him comes both the power and the will to give; through him alone is any gift acceptable or any work successful; to him all praise is due. ‘For of him, and through him, and to him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.’”

The deaconesses at Mildmay are bound by no vows; one great advantage of the institution is its perfect freedom. You can be an inmate as long or as short a time as you please. Some ladies, whose home ties prevent their giving much time to out-door labor, go to the deaconess home for the sake of devoting a month or two each year to systematic work for Christ; but others, who have nothing to hinder, make it their life-work. They are bound by no rule save that of punctuality. When they first come to the home they are told that they are trusted to occupy their time to the best advantage, and the trust is not abused.

The Mildmay institutions are not sectarian, but deeply religious in character; their founder was a clergyman of the Church of England, attached to the Low Church party, and the style of thought prevailing in that party predominates, to some extent, at Mildmay, considerable prominence being given to the second advent of our Lord, and the higher life of the believer. But Mr. James E. Mathieson, the present treasurer and superintendent, also the lady at the head of the deaconess house, and some of the deaconesses, are Presbyterians.

“The deaconess institution in England which is at present in close connection with those on the Continent is the one established in 1867 by Dr. Michael Laseron, at Tottenham, North London. It is unsectarian, but has been, from its commencement, chiefly supported by Non-conformists, the late Mr. Samuel Morley and his sons and his brother, Mr. John Morley, the treasurer of the institution, having been among its generous donors. Dr. and Mrs. Laseron were led, after the death of their only child, to open, in 1856, a ragged school for children of both sexes, and later an orphan home for poor girls. The orphan home has been managed by methods similar to those employed by Mr. George Müller in carrying on his orphanage in Bristol. The work, like most benevolent operations, grew on their hands. A servant-girls’ training home was added, and various evening schools. At length, as request was often made that older girls

from the home might assist as nurses in the care of the sick, Dr. Laseron, who is himself a German, determined to open a deaconess house and hospital after the model of Kaiserswerth. One of the sisters from the 'Bethanien' house, in Berlin, was the first deaconess, and a sister from Kaiserswerth the first superintendent. There are at present sixty-three deaconesses, and there are affiliated stations at hospitals at Dublin, Cork, Sunderland, and Scarborough. The regulations of the institution are in the main similar to those of Kaiserswerth, although they are, in some respects, rather less free. The deaconesses at the mother-house, Tottenham, carry on, besides their work in the hospital and dispensary, mission work among working girls, working-men, and policemen; they have also an evening school for men, a mothers' meeting, and various other benevolent operations."\*

We give the following as the principles and rules by which most of the deaconess institutions of the Church of England are governed, and as a condensed statement of the mature thought of the best minds in the Anglican communion upon this subject. These "general principles" and "proposed rules" were drawn up and concurred in at a conference in England by the archbishop and bishops whose signatures are appended, and communicated to the Church at large by the Very Reverend Dr. Howson, the Dean of Chester.

\* *Andover Review*, 1888.

## I. GENERAL PRINCIPLES.

*(a.) Definition of a deaconess.*

A deaconess is a woman set apart by a bishop, under that title, for service in the Church.

*(b.) Relation of a deaconess to a bishop.*

(1.) No deaconess or deaconess institution shall officially accept or resign work in a diocese without the express authority of the bishop of that diocese, which authority may at any time be withdrawn.

(2.) A deaconess shall be at liberty to resign her commission as deaconess, or may be deprived of it by the bishop of the diocese in which she is working.

*(c.) Relation of a deaconess to an incumbent.*

No deaconess shall officially accept work in a parish (except it be in some non-parochial position, as in a hospital or the like) without the express authority of the incumbent of that parish, which authority may at any time be withdrawn.

*(d.) Relation of a deaconess to a deaconess institution.*

In all matters not connected with the parochial or other system under which she is summoned to work, a deaconess may, if belonging to a deaconess institution, act in harmony with the general rules of such institution.

## II. RULES SUGGESTED.

*(a.) Probation.*

It is essential that none be admitted without careful previous preparation, both technical and religious.

*(b.) Dress.*

A deaconess should wear a dress which is at once simple and distinctive.

*(c.) Religious knowledge.*

It is essential to the efficiency of a deaconess that she should maintain her habit of prayer and meditation, and aim at continual progress in religious knowledge.

*(d.) Designation and signature.*

It is desirable that a deaconess should not drop the use of her surname; and with this end in view it is suggested that her official designation should be "*Deaconess A. B.*," (Christian and surname), and her official signature should be "*A. B., Deaconess.*"

P. S.—It is desirable that each deaconess institution should have a body of associates attached to it, for the purpose of general counsel and co-operation.

Signed by the archbishops and eighteen bishops.

A. C. CANTUAR.

G. A. LICHFIELD.

W. EBOR.

C. LINCOLN.

J. LONDON.

J. F. OXON.

S. WINTON.

W. C. PETERBOROUGH.

J. C. BANGOR.

T. L. ROCHESTER.

A. C. BATH AND WELLS.

G. SARUM.

HARVEY CARLISLE.

R. D. CHICHESTER.

W. CHESTER.

E. H. ELY.

C. J. GLOUCESTER AND

C. ST. DAVID'S.

BRISTOL.

F. EXON.

J. HEREFORD.

The Wesleyans of England are also turning their attention to this form of work, especially in connection with the London West Central Mission. This is under the joint superintendency of two prominent ministers, Rev. Hugh Price Hughes and Rev. Mark Guy Pearse, members of the English Wesleyan Conference. As to the origin of the mission Mr. Hughes says: "We realized that we were partly responsible for the existing sin and misery of London, and that we must do our share in the great work which demands the united devotion of all the Churches."

After investigation it was found that Methodism had done less for the West End than for any other spot in England or her colonies. "We discovered four hundred thousand persons, among whom we were doing nothing. . . . The west center of London is the most important sphere of Christian work in the British Empire, and therefore in the world. . . . This quarter of London embraces both houses of Parliament, the clubs, and the immensely influential classes who are significantly called 'society.' Above all, this part of London is the great center of pleasure. It is the Vanity Fair of the civilized world, competing even with Paris in its elaborate, costly, and artistic provisions for all the lusts of the flesh." \*

The mission is organized on a catholic basis, and enjoys the co-operation of members of all Christian Churches. One of its institutions is the "Katherine

\* *First Annual Report*, 1888.

House," and a part of its working force are the twelve "Sisters of the People," who reside there. Of this the report says: "Katherine House, the residence of the Sisters of the People, was opened early in November, 1887, and from that day the work of the sisters dates its commencement. Three sisters came into residence at once, and after Christmas more joined us, till, by the end of February, our number was complete, twelve being all that we can accommodate at present."

The work of the sisters is constantly increasing and developing. Their plan of work is similar to that of the Mildmay Mission deaconesses. Each sister has a district allotted to her in the slums of that part of the city, which she visits regularly and systematically. They render to the sick and poor such help as they can for their physical needs, and give spiritual instruction which in many instances has led them to Christ and a reformed life. They conduct a "reading class for women" and a "mothers' meeting." They have also "The Sheen Society," the object of which is to make and collect garments for distribution among the poor living in the districts visited by the sisters. The society is worked by means of local secretaries, who induce as many members as possible to join them and collect and send off the garments every quarter. Each member sends in every three months one garment, either new or an old one repaired.



There is also an inquiry room, specially under the direction of the sisters, where women come for religious instruction. The first step with many of them is to sign the total abstinence pledge, and many instances are recorded of rescue and conversion. There is also a "Girls' Club," for "the wild, rough girls who abound in the neighborhood of Soho."

The first evening twenty-five girls became members, and the room soon became so full that no new members could be admitted. It is open every evening but Saturday, from eight to ten o'clock, and is always closed with singing and prayer. "The wild, rough girls" of Soho are not so easily tamed as the sisters could wish, and sometimes make much trouble, as the following instance shows :

"One evening, about nine o'clock, three or four rather large, coarse girls came into the club, showing at once by their manner of entrance and bearing that they were not bent on any good. Very soon they began to dance, not in the most refined and modest manner. Now dancing is against our rules, and is never allowed, so the sister in charge called upon them instantly to stop. They did so for the moment, but began again as soon as her back was turned. She again spoke to them, and the same conduct was repeated three or four times. She then saw that discipline must be maintained, and ordered those girls to leave the club. They refused flatly to do so; and when other sisters came forward to assist in conduct-

ing them from the room they lay down on the floor full length, while some of the other girls flung themselves upon them, so as to prevent their removal. The sisters then gave orders that every girl should leave the club. Some of the more orderly ones set a good example by going out quietly, but the rebellious faction held out. Nevertheless they were led or carried out one by one by the sisters and placed outside the door. We had got the ringleader out, as we fondly imagined, when, lo and behold! she shot in head-foremost, meteor-like, through a window near the ground at the other end of the room. However, her removal was again effected, and the room was at last cleared. The sisters alone remained—heated, but triumphant.”

The most gratifying part of the story is that in a short time the rebels returned very quietly and meekly to beg the sisters' pardon. They were excluded from the room for the remainder of the week, and were summoned to appear before the head sister, Mrs. Hughes, for a serious reprimand. They obeyed the summons of their own free will, received the lecture in lamb-like meekness, with expressions of penitence, and were again restored to favor and confidence.

These lady workers have taken the name of “sister,” instead of “deaconess,” as perhaps better known to the people and more popular, but it will be seen that their work is the same as that pursued by the mission deaconesses. They are known as Sister Huldah,

Sister Clara, etc. They have adopted a dress graceful and uniform. A heavy drab veil falling from the back of the bonnet and a ribbon bow of the same color at the neck are the marked features. These twelve "sisters" live together in Katherine House; all are *ladies* in the English sense, and support themselves wholly, receiving no pay for their services.

There is also at Halifax, England, an institution kindred at least to that of the deaconesses. It is a training-school for female evangelists. It is under the auspices of Mr. Clegg, a Wesleyan Methodist, but has no connection with the Conference. Some of the ladies in this school are visitors and some are evangelists, in the now commonly accepted sense of the word. They go where they are invited to hold services in churches, and preach much as evangelists do in this country. The institution is in its infancy, and is being scrutinized as an experiment. It somewhat resembles the Missionary Training-School in Chicago.

## CHAPTER XIV.

## DEACONESSSES IN THE UNITED STATES.

## LUTHERAN CHURCH.

THE first mention that we find of the order of deaconesses in the United States is in connection with the Lutheran Church, and comes from Kaiserswerth.

In Fliedner's annual report, January 1, 1847, he says: "We have been urgently requested to send deaconesses from here to North America, to a prominent city of the United States, to take charge of a hospital and organize a mother house for the training of deaconesses. The American clergyman who personally made this request laid the matter upon our conscience with such urgency that we could not but promise to send out a number of sisters as soon as it should be possible."

Two years elapsed before it was found possible to fulfill this promise. In the report of 1848 the matter is again alluded to in the following language: "We had expected to send out deaconesses to North America this spring, but thus far we have been unable to do it." In January, 1849, the announcement is made: "God willing, in the course of this summer four deaconesses will start for Pittsburg, North

America, to assist in the organization of a mother-house there.”

In 1850 Pastor Fliedner again reports: “In North America, thus far, no deaconesses were to be found, but a great number of Roman Catholic Sisters of Mercy. Now the Rev. Dr. Passavant, an English Lutheran pastor in Pittsburg, Pa., has established a hospital since we promised him to send out deaconesses for the nursing of the sick and the training of American probationers. In the month of June, 1849, the inspector (Fliedner himself) had the pleasure of accompanying four sisters in their journey to Pittsburg. About the middle of July they took charge of the newly established hospital, and immediately afterward they received the first American probationer.”\*

As this is the first deaconess home on this continent, a brief account of it is in place. Its establishment was due to the labors of the Rev. W. A. Passavant, D.D., the pastor of the English Lutheran Church in Pittsburg. At first a house in Alleghany City was rented for the purpose of a home and hospital, but was not used to any great extent. A property in Pittsburg which had been used as a female seminary was bought for \$5,500 for a hospital and deaconess institution. Rev. Dr. Fliedner and the four deaconesses having arrived from Germany, Sunday, July 17, 1849, was appointed as the time to dedicate the

\* *Phebe the Deaconess*, Rev. Dr. Spaeth, p. 20.

place to the holy purposes for which it had been purchased. Dr. Fliedner gave an address in German, explaining the design of the institution as an infirmary for the sick and a mother-house for the training of Christian deaconesses for hospitals, asylums, and congregations in other parts of the United States.

The establishment of the institution made some impression at the time, but nothing commensurate with its importance. The Lutheran Synod was disposed to hold the work on probation, and was afraid to fully indorse it. It said: "This ministerium awaits with deep interest the result of the work made in behalf of the institution of Protestant deaconesses at Pittsburg." \*

The work of the deaconesses was highly appreciated by the intelligent citizens, and constant application was made for their services by directors of hospitals, magistrates, and private individuals. Many of the ignorant classes felt aggrieved at the presence of the hospital, saying that contagious diseases would be brought, to the injury of the city. In cases where deaconesses were sent to nurse in private families it brought large donations to the institution. The greatest difficulty encountered was in finding women willing to enter as probationers, perhaps not so much through lack of piety or zeal as from prejudice and want of faith in the utility of the institution itself. An addition to the little band was made May

\* *Phebe the Deaconess*, Rev. Dr. Spaeth, p. 20.

28, 1850, by the consecration of a native American sister, Louise Marthens, the first woman ever formally ordained to the merciful, Christ-like work of a deaconess on this continent. The exercises connected with her reception took place in the English Lutheran church. On the occasion a sermon was preached, founded on Rom. xvi, 1.

“The sermon being ended, the candidate approached the altar, and after professing anew her Christian faith according to the articles of the Apostles’ Creed, answered the following questions in the affirmative, with a distinct and courageous voice: Have you, of your own free choice, moved thereto by the love of Jesus Christ, and without the persuasion of others, chosen this service upon which you are about to enter? Are you resolved, by the help of God, faithfully to perform the duties of this office, in his fear and according to his holy word?” \*

The assembled synod and congregation then joyfully united with the newly received sister in singing the appropriate and beautiful hymn of Charles Wesley (No. 470 of the Methodist Episcopal Hymnal):

“If so poor a worm as I  
 May to thy great glory live,  
 All my actions sanctify,  
 All my words and thoughts receive;  
 Claim me for thy service; claim  
 All I have, and all I am.

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\* *Phebe the Deaconess*, Rev. Dr. Spaeth, p. 25.

“ Take my soul and body’s powers ;  
Take my memory, mind, and will ;  
All my goods, and all my hours ;  
All I know, and all I feel ;  
All I think, or speak, or do ;  
Take my heart, but make it new.

“ Now, O God, thine own I am ;  
Now I give thee back thine own ;  
Freedom, friends, and health, and fame,  
Consecrate to thee alone ;  
Thine I live, thrice happy I ;  
Happier still if thine I die.”

It is gratifying to note that this first American deaconess was a faithful and efficient laborer. Of her later life we know nothing ; perhaps in some quiet retreat she is spending the evening of life awaiting in hope the coming of her Lord, or, perhaps, has already heard the summons, “ It is enough ; come up higher.” She was the first of what will be, no doubt, a long line of noble, self-sacrificing women, whose lives will reflect the glory of their Lord, and who, having won “ many to righteousness, shall shine as the stars for ever and ever.”

Another deaconess was sent from Kaiserswerth in 1851, and three German immigrants entered as probationers. At the present time Dr. Passavant has an orphanage in Rochester, Pa., where the one remaining deaconess of the original four from Kaiserswerth still resides. He has an infirmary in Pittsburg, Pa., a hospital and deaconess home in Milwaukee, Wis., the Emergency hospital in Chicago, and a hospital in



Jacksonville, Ill. He has accomplished much good, but has not had the success deserved. The work has not expanded, and no complete organization, after the German type, has been attained.

Another deaconess institution, of later origin but greater promise, in connection with the Lutheran Church is located in Philadelphia, Pa. This is also an off-shoot of the Kaiserswerth Institution. The first efforts toward securing the deaconesses were made by Mr. J. D. Lankenau and the German consul, Mr. Charles H. Myer. Their services were desired in the German hospital. Deaconesses arrived from the mother house in June, 1884, and took charge of the work in that institution.

A mother house has since been built and a board incorporated, consisting of nine gentlemen, to take charge of the administration and furtherance of this important interest. The mother house, which is known as the "Mary J. Drexel Home," stands on the grounds of the hospital. It is a magnificent building of yellow brick and marble which cost a half million dollars, probably one of the finest buildings ever consecrated as a deaconess home. It has every modern improvement adapted to its purposes which science could suggest or money procure. It is large and substantial, beautiful in architectural design, and will be a lasting monument to the munificence of its founder. A part of the building will be occupied as a hospital for women and children. It

has a beautiful chapel where divine worship is daily celebrated. It is under the spiritual direction of the rector, Rev. A. Cordes, whose rectory stands within the inclosure. This clergyman came from Germany, where he had served as an assistant rector in a similar institution. A part of his work is the instruction of the deaconesses in the religious and technical duties of their calling.

The rules of the institution are the same as those at Kaiserswerth, including the requirements for admission, and the dress worn. Unmarried women, or widows without children, of a pious mind, unblemished reputation and good health, not under sixteen nor above forty years of age, are received as probationers. Having served one year or more, faithfully, the probationer is received and consecrated a full deaconess on nomination of the superior deaconess and the vote of the board.

The deaconess does not receive wages for her services, but the mother house provides for all her necessities, including a regular sum for pocket money, enough to cover all her little personal expenses. If she becomes sick or disabled in the practice of her calling, she is cared for by the mother house as long as she lives.

The institution forms one family, the individual members of which are in duty bound to live together in harmony, endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace, and to avoid

every thing that can hinder the prosperity of the sisterhood.

The superior has the direct oversight of all deaconesses and probationers. All must follow her orders conscientiously. She must especially superintend the preparation and training of probationers, and when they are considered ready for it she must propose them for the deaconess office.

At the present time (1889) there are about twelve deaconesses and twenty probationers, but as yet only two are native Americans. On January 13, 1889, the first consecration of deaconesses occurred in the beautiful chapel of the home. Catherine Bossert, Lena Rieger, and Marie Sowa were the candidates. Religious services were conducted by the rector, assisted by Rev. Dr. Spaeth. Each candidate received the regular cap and a silver cross, as she entered the chapel, and all were consecrated to the office and work of the diaconate by the laying on of hands in the presence of a large congregation, including the president and members of the board. The founding and endowment of the institution have been accomplished by the liberality of Mr. J. D. Lankenau; much is also due to the indefatigable labors of Rev. A. Spaeth, D. D., who has seen his hopes realized in its establishment.\*

\* See *Phebe the Deaconess*, by Rev. A. Spaeth, D.D.

## THE PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH.\*

The next movement in the order of time was by the Protestant Episcopal Church. This step was taken in connection with St. Andrew's parish in the city of Baltimore, under the ministry of Rev. Horace Stringfellow, in 1855, with the sanction and approval of the bishop of the diocese. Two ladies gave themselves to the work of ministering to the poor. A house was soon secured and opened under the name of St. Andrew's Infirmary, and the work rapidly grew. The number increased to four resident deaconesses and four associate sisters. The following extract from an early report shows the aims and work of the institution :

“The deaconesses look to no organization of persons to furnish the pecuniary aid required by the demands of their position. Their first efforts have been for the destitute sick. Out of the house they minister daily to the suffering and destitute wherever found; some only requiring temporary medical aid and nursing; others, whom God has chastened with more continuous suffering, requiring in their penury and desolation constant care and continuous ministrations.”

In addition they have two schools, one for vagrant children and one for the children of the Church who may be committed to them. A beautiful and impressive form for setting apart a deaconess is used, and

\* See Potter, *Sisterhoods and Deaconesses*, and the *Church Cyclopædia*.

rules of discipline and forms of devotion are provided in keeping with the doctrines and usages of the Church.

These rules differing somewhat from others, we extract the following :

The members are divided into three classes : (1.) The United Deaconesses ; (2.) Probationers ; (3.) The Associate Deaconesses. The United Deaconesses are those who, having passed through their probationary terms and contemplating a permanent continuance in the order, are admitted, upon application to the bishop, by a unanimous election of the United Deaconesses. They reside in the parental house, unless, being called by Providence to some other sphere of duty, they depart with the full sanction of the bishop and of the order ; they then retain their allegiance to the society, are subject to its rule, report their work, and must be ready to be recalled. All must hold themselves in readiness to go to any field the bishop may send them. The government is vested in the first deaconess, who is nominated by the bishop and elected by the United Deaconesses. Each lady is furnished with \$100 per annum for personal expenses and private charities, while in active service and during sickness and age she is provided for by the society. All are forbidden to receive compensation, and are at liberty to retire six months after resignation has been given to the bishop.

There was also an organization of deaconesses effected in Mobile, Ala., in the year 1864, by the

bishop of that diocese. Originally it consisted of "three godly women," who associated themselves under the bishop's direction and supervision for whatever labor might be assigned them. Their first work was an orphanage and boarding-school, and was designed eventually to include an infirmary, widows' house, and reformatory asylum. The bishop is the rector and head of the institution.

There is a form of service for the reception of a probationer and also for the reception of a deaconess. The whole is deeply devotional and after the usual forms of the Episcopal Church. We here give a brief form of prayer, selected from among others, as indicative of the work which the deaconess is expected to do and the spirit in which it ought to be done :

"O Almighty and everlasting God, who dost vouchsafe to accept and bless the services of those who serve thee with a willing mind, grant, we beseech thee, to this thy handmaiden such willingness of heart, such humility and quietness of spirit, such sure trust and confidence in thy love and favor, such simplicity and sincerity in the denial of self, and such patient endurance of privation, hardship, thanklessness, and reproach in the service of the poor and the little ones of thy flock as may obtain thy merciful acceptance and overflowing blessing, through the alone merits of Jesus Christ, thine only Son, our Lord and Saviour. Amen."

An exhortation is addressed to the candidates in which they are reminded of the "dignity and honor of their holy calling" as co-workers with God in his work of mercy and benevolence to our fallen race, and that they "are joined in companionship with the blessed angels, whose employment and delight it is to minister unto the heirs of salvation." To live in an abiding sense of their holy calling, and cultivate in an especial manner the *habit of devotion*. That they should look upon the office and work from the height of eternity, and not estimate it by the judgment of the world, but by that of God who has declared, "He that winneth souls is wise." They are reminded that they will have great need to daily consider him—Christ—as their great exemplar, and following him in his labor of love they should also follow him in his patience. The failure of the world rightly to appreciate the labors of the deaconess is thus alluded to: "The secret of your strength will be that you look not to the world—which cannot fully take in the tenor of your mission, not even to those for whom you labor, for they cannot comprehend your work of disinterested love—but to the blessed Jesus, from whom you receive the Spirit to work in your calling, whose example you must follow and whose cross you bear."

The Bishop Potter Memorial House, located in Philadelphia, in connection with the Episcopal Hospital, is a noble institution. It is not a deaconess home,

though organized to carry on the distinctive work of deaconesses.

A probation of six months or a year is required of those who enter. At the end of that period, if the candidate is adjudged worthy, her special line of duty is determined. The services of the members are gratuitous. They have their board and lodging free of expense, when necessary; but, as the house is supported by free-will offerings, each member is expected to contribute according to her ability; if she can afford it, the full amount of the cost of her board, especially during the term of probation. All members fare alike, and work to the extent of their ability in designated spheres. The house is not intended as an asylum for the homeless or world-weary, but as a household of fresh, loving hearts, strong in all their powers to

“Serve the Lord with gladness.”

The work is divided into three departments: Nursing, mission work, and parish schools. The term of engagement for full members is not less than one nor more than three years, at the expiration of which term it may be renewed if desired.

This is in every sense a deaconess home, as to its aims and work, without the distinctive title or dress. The work is for the sick and destitute, the ignorant and degraded. It has accomplished much for the bodies and souls of men. No distinctive badge is



worn. Much attention is paid to the spiritual instruction of the people and many souls have been led to Christ by the instrumentality of the members.

The work and organization of deaconesses in the Protestant Episcopal Church received a new impetus in 1871. In 1869 the Board of Missions appointed a committee to report at the next annual meeting "on the subject of organized services of women as a most important feature of missionary work." This committee presented an able report which embodied the "General Principles" recommended by the English bishops, and a series of resolutions. The report was accepted and the resolutions were adopted. They recommended the "engrafting" of such organizations of women upon the already existing missionary organizations of the Church. A committee was appointed to consider the propriety of opening institutions for the training of deaconesses. The interest manifested in this report and the zeal with which the work was taken up were indicative of large accomplishments in the near future, but which, we think, has scarcely been realized in fact.

The words of Dr. Potter indicate a correct appreciation of the spirit of our country and times. "Let it only be distinctly kept in view that the American Church has recognized and accepted such organizations as agencies for a higher and more unreserved type of Christian activity, and not as refuges for a merely contemplative pietism—as enrolling women to

be true yoke fellows, not recluses; workers, not dreamers—and it can hardly matter greatly by what name they are known or under what particular form of commission they labor.” \*

Under the impulse given by the above named report, a deaconess association connected with the Diocese of Long Island, was organized by Bishop Littlejohn in 1872. He says: “Sunday, February 11, in St. Mary’s Church, Brooklyn, I publicly admitted six godly and well-tried women to the office of deaconess; and on the evening of the 15th of March, in Emanuel Church, Brooklyn, one; in all seven.” The rules by which this order is governed are for the most part found in the “General Principles” † above mentioned. As to the efficiency and acceptability of their work the following testimony is borne: “The parish clergy who have welcomed them to their side as fellow-workers among the poor, the fallen, and the suffering of every name, bear grateful testimony to the value of their unobtrusive, obedient, and systematic service.”

There is a “form of admitting deaconesses to their office.” It is concise, appropriate, and beautiful. It differs somewhat from the others named, and is distinguished by two things. The bishop takes the deaconess by the right hand and pronounces this blessing upon her :

“God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy

\* *Sisterhoods and Deaconesses*, p. 13.

† See page 227.

Ghost bless, preserve, and sanctify thee; and so fill thee with all faith, wisdom, charity, and humility that thou mayest serve before him to the glory of his great name and the benefit of his holy Church, and in the end attain to everlasting life through the merits and mediation of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

“I admit thee, dearly beloved, to the office of deaconess, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.” Also, at the close of the service, the bishop uses the prayer designated to be used at the ordination of a deaconess in the *Apostolical Constitutions*.\*

The following hymn is also used :

#### HYMN.

“How blessed, from the bonds of care  
 And earthly fetters free,  
 In singleness of heart and aim  
 Thy servants, Lord, to be!  
 The hardest toil to undertake,  
 With joy at thy command,  
 The meanest office to receive  
 With meekness at thy hand!

“With willing heart and longing eyes  
 To watch before thy gate,  
 Ready to run the weary race,  
 To bear the heavy weight;  
 No voice of thunder to expect,  
 But follow calm and still,  
 For love can easily divine  
 The One Beloved’s will.

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\* See page 83.

" Thus may we serve thee, gracious Lord!  
 Thus ever thine alone;  
 Our souls and bodies given to thee,  
 The purchase thou hast won.  
 Through evil or through good report,  
 Still keeping by thy side,  
 By life or death in this poor flesh  
 Let Christ be magnified!

" How happily the working days  
 In this dear service fly!  
 How rapidly the closing hour,  
 The time of rest, draws nigh!  
 When all the faithful gather home,  
 A joyful company;  
 And every-where the Master is  
 Shall his own servants be."

In addition to the places named, the order is also working in Louisiana, and associate members are laboring in many other dioceses.

It will be observed that the "setting apart" of women to the office of deaconess in the Protestant Episcopal Church is not an "ordination by the imposition of hands," but simply a designation to the work assigned her by prayer and appropriate religious ceremony.

According to testimony introduced in a previous chapter, Bishop Tait, of London, "duly invested" Catherine Elizabeth Ferard with the "office of deaconess." That office having been "canonically conferred," we suppose she was ordained by the imposition of hands.

In the form of service for the reception of a proba-

tioner, as used in the Diocese of Alabama, we find great liberty accorded to women in conducting religious service. The rubric says, "Should the rector be absent upon the admission of a probationer, let the chief deaconess take his place and ask the questions, and use the prayers as above written." This, as we believe, eminently proper in itself, is not often allowed either in episcopal or non-episcopal churches. We have seen that in Strasburg the chief deaconess takes part in the ordination of a deaconess by the laying on of hands, with the rector; but the Kaiserswerth Conference decided that such an act was an unwarranted innovation. The cases are not parallel, but they illustrate each other.

In treating of the deaconess institutions in the Protestant Episcopal Church it is proper to bear in mind that they are no part of the Church itself, but are associations that have grown up within it, under the fostering care of the bishops who have seen fit to organize and appoint them within their own dioceses. They are not enjoined or forbidden by the canons, and their establishment is, therefore, optional with those interested. The order has been tentatively employed with excellent results; but its relation to the Church has never been fully defined. It is within the bishop's power to institute it and have it as a recognized association in his diocese; but an effort has been made to obtain for it a wider recognition.

In 1880 a canon presented by the bishop of Massa-

chusetts was accepted by a large majority in the House of Bishops; but, owing to the late date of the session when it was sent to the Lower House, there was no time to consider it, and the subject, owing to the press of other business, was not considered at the convention of 1883. But this proposed canon may be given as the deliberate opinion of a majority of the bishops, and is the latest utterance on the subject with which we are acquainted.

“*Resolved*, The House of Deputies concurring, that the following canon be enacted, to be entitled Canon vi of Title iii, ‘Of Organized Religious Societies within the Church:’ . . .

“1. Women of devout character and approved fitness may be set apart by any bishop of this Church for the work of a deaconess, according to such form as may be authorized by the House of Bishops, or, in default thereof, by such form as may be set forth by the bishop of the diocese.

“2. The duties of a deaconess are declared to be the care of our Lord’s poor and sick, the education of the young, the religious instruction of the neglected, the reclaiming of the fallen, and other works of Christian charity.

“3. No woman shall be set apart for the work of a deaconess until she be twenty-five years of age, unless the bishop, for special reasons, shall determine otherwise, but in no case shall the age be less than twenty-one years. The bishop shall also satisfy himself

that the candidate has had an adequate preparation for the work, both technical and religious, which preparation shall have covered the period of at least one year."

We omit articles numbered 4, 5, 6, respectively, as not of general interest.

Number 7 provides that "the constitution and rules for the government of any institution for the training of deaconesses, or of any community in which deaconesses are associated, must have the sanction, in writing, of the bishop of the diocese in which such institution or community exists. All formularies of common worship used in such institution or community must have the like sanction, and shall be in harmony with the usage of this Church, and like the principles of the Book of Common Prayer." \*

#### THE GERMAN REFORMED CHURCH.

In 1866 an effort was made to revive the order of deaconesses in the German Reformed Church in the United States.

"The Hon. J. Dixon Roman, of Hagerstown, Maryland, gave to the congregation of that city \$5,000, and with it sent a proposition to the consistory that, according to his wish, three ladies of the congregation should be chosen and ordained to the order of deaconesses in the congregation, with absolute control of the income of said fund for the purposes and duties

\* *Church Cyclopædia*, art. "Deaconess."

as practiced in the early Church. This, with the action of the Lebanon classis, which, in 1867, requested the synod to take into consideration the propriety of restoring the apostolic office of deaconess, brought the question before the highest judicatory of the Church." \*

The question has not been disposed of up to this time (1889). It has been agitated at different synods. A paper on the subject was read before the synod in 1880, and a proposition was made to amend the constitution of the Church, establishing the office of deaconess, but it was voted down, the synod not considering such action called for at that juncture. The matter was commended to the favorable consideration of the consistories, but no action has been taken at any subsequent synod and the office is not recognized as within the constitution of the Church.

#### THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.

This large and influential communion is feeling the impulse given to the work of deaconesses throughout the Protestant world. But up to this time little has been done toward the establishment and development of any organization for the training of women for specific work in the Church. Individual pastors and local churches have taken action, but they are isolated cases.

At the Pan-Presbyterian Council held in Philadel-

\* McClintock and Strong, art. "Deaconess."



phia in 1880, Fritz Fliedner, son of Dr. Fliedner, of Kaiserswerth, was present as a member. Through his influence, the German Presbyterian church on Corinthian Avenue, February 7, 1881, by a unanimous vote placed the sick of the congregation under the care of five deaconesses, whom they elected and appointed. That arrangement still exists, and gives great satisfaction.

A class has been formed by the pastor to be trained in church work, and from this suitable persons are selected to fill the office when vacancies occur.

In California some Presbyterian churches have elected ladies for a certain term to take charge of the sick and poor, and, though not ordained as deaconesses, they are invested with the duties and responsibilities of that office.

The subject of deaconesses was brought before the Pan-Presbyterian Council held in London, in 1887, and received favorable notice and commendation. Dr. Charteris, of Edinburgh, was chairman of the committee to whom the matter was referred. He has since written upon the subject, in the *Presbyterian Review* of April, 1888: "It appears, therefore, that the time has fully come for the organization of women's work by the churches on some definite principle. We suggest (*a*) that in every congregation experienced Christian women should be organized for ministering to the wants of the sick and the poor, and for guiding the inexperienced of their own sex. After

a certain time of service such experienced women should be enrolled by the Kirk Session as those who have purchased a good degree by their self-denying labors. We suggest (*b*) that, under the sanction of the presbytery of the bounds, trained women-workers should be enrolled as deaconesses. The training entitling a woman to this honor and designation may have been acquired in her own sphere, and under the eye of the rulers of her own congregation, or—whether wholly or partially—in some training institution. . . . There are in Presbyterian, as in other Churches, women who would gladly devote their lives to Christian work, and would welcome the offer of a home in which they could live, near which they could usually work, and from which they could go to any place, near or distant, where they might be wanted for a longer or shorter time.

“It is not contemplated that any one would be bound or pledged to continue in such work any longer than her continued free will prompts her. Any one could at any time retire.” \*

At the close of his article Dr. Charteris makes the following points, which are elaborated and sustained :

“We submit that such a scheme is, 1. Scriptural. 2. It is practical. 3. It is, therefore, within the sphere of the church’s duty. 4. Though new, it is not revolutionary or novel.”

The foregoing indicates something practical in the

\* *Presbyterian Review*, 1888, p. 290.

near future by the Presbyterian Church, which is strong and rich in material—wealth, and good works—and though eminently conservative is alert and aggressive. But this Church, like all others, waits for some development among the people before it provides for the restoration of this form of Christian labor in its organic law. The spirit of God moves on individual hearts rather than on corporate bodies, and only after an idea has assumed some tangible shape and grown up within the Church does she recognize it, and give it a name and a place and bid it Godspeed.

There is at present, in the book of government of the Presbyterian Church, no authorization of deaconesses as officers of the church. They cannot, therefore, be elected and ordained in the same way that a deacon or elder is, but they can be appointed just as a superintendent of a Sunday-school or a lady missionary is appointed. The Philadelphia Presbytery took action in 1887 looking with favor upon the appointment of deaconesses in this sense, making the deaconess an officer of the local congregation like the Sunday-school superintendent, and also overtured the assembly to consider the subject of making deaconesses officers in the church by action of the assemblies and presbyteries.

## CHAPTER XV.

## DEACONESSES IN THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH.

It will be readily conceded that no branch of the Church universal has ever given to women more encouragement or greater liberty in religious labor than Methodism. This was a striking characteristic of the revival in the eighteenth century, and there have come down to us the names of many eminent women whose characters reflected the image of Christ, whose zeal and devotion glowed with intensity, and whose spirit breathed universal love. That revival rekindled the fires that had been quenched or suffered to burn low on the altars of Protestantism. It sent the Church back to primitive doctrines and usages, it was a baptism of the Holy Ghost on the hearts of men and women, and under its power they proclaimed the glad tidings of salvation.

In the economy of Methodism women are admitted to various offices, and encouraged to labor in building up the kingdom of God. They are frequently appointed class-leaders; and probationers and Church members are committed to them for spiritual oversight and direction. As the leader stands related to her class, the functions of the office are spiritual. We

do not claim that female class-leaders are deaconesses, but a part of their work is analogous to that of the deaconess. The Book of Discipline shows this: "It is the duty of the leader to see each person in his class once a week at least, in order (1) to inquire how their souls prosper; (2) to advise, reprove, comfort, and exhort as occasion may require; (3) to receive what they are willing to give toward the relief of the . . . poor, . . . to inform the minister of any that are sick." Though these prescribed duties may bear but slight resemblance to the duties of the modern deaconess, they resemble to a greater degree the duties of the deaconess of the early Church, who had charge of the poor and instructed the catechumens.

In the early days of Methodism Mr. Wesley found the sick so numerous that the class-leaders and stewards were not able to visit them as often as the circumstances demanded; he therefore laid the matter before the societies and asked for help from any who were willing to assist. A large number offered themselves for this service.

Wesley says, "I chose six and forty of them whom I judged to be of the most tender, loving spirit, divided the town into twenty-three parts, and desired two of them to visit the sick in each division.

"It is the business of a visitor of the sick to see every sick person in his district thrice a week. To inquire into the state of their souls and to advise them as occasion may require. To inquire into their dis-

orders and procure advice for them, to relieve them if they are in want. To do any thing for them which he (or she) can do. Upon reflection I saw how exactly in this also we had copied after the primitive Church. What are the ancient deacons? What was Phœbe, the deaconess, but a visitor of the sick?"

Methodism is well adapted to call into exercise the varied talents of its female members. Its organization is peculiar. It divides its membership into classes, meeting at least once a week, at which time it is the privilege of each member to give some statement of religious experience, and the duty of the leader to "advise, reprove, comfort, or exhort as occasion may require." This contributes to the development of talent by inducing thoughtful self-examination and exhortation for the edification of others. The love-feast, for which the ancient deaconess made preparation, is perpetuated in Methodism, and is a religious service in which the talent of all is exercised to edification in holy song, fervent prayer, and joyful Christian testimony.

This system has developed the talent of woman to a greater degree than the legislators of the Church have been willing to recognize or provide for in its organic law. They have been slow in perception and conservative in action. In this to a certain extent they may be justified; it is not easy to correct mistakes or take away privileges once granted. But the general trend of the Church is upward and onward to

a just equality for male and female in all educational and ecclesiastical matters.

The women of the Church in general, and of American Methodism in particular, have been struggling for years to obtain a proper recognition of their talent, and an adequate field for their energies. Not in the sense that they have been oppressed, but in that they have felt conscious of a mighty power for usefulness in the kingdom of God, if the way could be opened and they could obtain authority to act. On this point, however, the Church has been conservative from long usage; its traditions for ages have been against the public labors of women as a part of the clergy or as having any specific churchly duties or functions to which they should be appointed by ecclesiastical authority.

From earliest ages woman has been placed under great political disabilities, and the same regulation that prevails in regard to the political franchise has been carried into the Church, and its corporate power has been restricted to "male members," while two-thirds of the communicants, the piety, the intelligence, and the zeal that keeps the altar fires burning, belong to the other sex. Christianity has benefited woman immensely, but only a part of its truth has as yet been recognized and applied. But the day is dawning when, as in apostolic times, no special account will be made of male or female any more than of Jew or Greek, bond or free.

The Woman's Foreign Missionary Society, one of the grandest organizations known in the Methodist Episcopal Church, is a crystallization of that power so long felt and ever seeking manifestation in outward form. The women were impelled forward by the love they bore to Christ and his cause, and entered the field to glean after the reapers, but are gathering and binding some of the heaviest sheaves.

The Womans' Christian Temperance Union, including all denominations, is another embodiment of the same power. It was born of the Christian zeal of woman. The pent-up agonies of the soul found vent in tears and prayers, and her faith and hope crystallized in that organization which now directs the energies of thousands of women in many lines of usefulness in all parts of the world.

The revival of the ancient order of deaconesses is a movement of kindred character. It received its initial impulse from the labors of a woman whose interpretation of the Holy Scriptures impelled her to break through the conventionalities of modern society, to visit the prisoners, and proclaim the word of God.\* The Methodist Episcopal Church, like all others, waited until God moved upon the hearts of some of his people to call into existence something of this order before it opened the way by ecclesiastical law.

The first effort toward the establishment of deacon-

\* Elizabeth Fry.



esses in the Methodist Episcopal Church was in connection with its German mission. This was natural. The deaconess institution flourishes on German soil, and this form of Christian effort being so largely in use by all Protestant bodies in Germany Methodism could not do well without it. The Kaiserswerth deaconess being seen in all the large cities would be a constant stimulus.

The work commenced in 1873, under the direction of the Rev. C. Weiss, with two Sisters. The number has now increased to nearly one hundred, and homes have been established in Frankfort, Berlin, Hamburg, Zurich, and St. Gall. In the institution in Frankfort last year two hundred and forty-six patients were nursed. An earnest effort is also made for the rescue of fallen women, and for the comfort and reformation of prisoners. A course of instruction, both religious and technical, is given to the deaconess. Additional buildings have recently been secured in Frankfort and Hamburg to accommodate the increasing work. The institution has so far commended itself to the city and government authorities as to secure for the deaconesses the free use of government and street railroads. They are respected and loved for their works' sake, and their lives of sacrifice and service among the poor win souls for the Saviour, whose Spirit prompts them, and whose cause they serve.

This work in our German mission prompted the

home Church to efforts in the same direction. It has often been remarked that, at the inception of any great movement which the Church seems to demand, the thought is laid on the hearts of God's people in different places at the same time; at length it takes root in some mind and heart, and assumes definite form.

Mrs. Lucy Rider Meyer, of Chicago, will be honored as the first person who gave this work practical shape in the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States. We believe it is destined to be of such magnitude as will forever render her name distinguished in the annals of Methodism. Mrs. Meyer is the principal of The Chicago Training School for City, Home, and Foreign Missions.

The object of this school is thus stated :

“This institution was established to increase the number and efficiency of evangelistic workers, in both home and foreign fields, and to utilize the undirected or misdirected energies of Christian women in active religious work. Its specific objects are :

“1. To give to any one who desires it, whether intending to enter the missionary field or not, a broad, basal knowledge of the word of God.

“2. To afford a thorough drill in methods of teaching.

“3. To give general information concerning missionary fields, including statistics and a knowledge of the habits, customs, and religions of the people.

“4. To afford an opportunity for courses of lectures on elementary medicine and nursing.

“5. To give practical training in the missionary work of our large city, by industrial schools and house-to-house visitation among the neglected classes.

“6. To furnish a true home under Christian and missionary influences for our students, and to give practical training in domestic work and management, under the care of a competent matron.

“7. To test those offering themselves for home or foreign missionary fields, both as to physical strength, mental fitness, and consecrated purposes.

“8. To aid churches and pastors in the present great emergency in city missionary work.”

This institution is kindred in character and work to a deaconess home, and it is no wonder that one grew out of the other. The first direct effort at deaconesses' work in connection with the above school was in the summer of 1887. Under the direction of Mr. and Mrs. Meyer an average of eight consecrated women remained in the city of Chicago during the intense heat of the summer months, working without salary among the needy poor and sick.

“During these three summer months 2,751 religious calls were made, many sick and destitute were found and cared for, and in 468 homes the Bible was read and prayer offered. Moreover, many children were led to the Sunday-school, many more were taught there, and some of them were led to

accept Christ as their personal Saviour. The whole expense of the work during these three months was \$360 35, and the receipts were \$366 90, leaving a balance of \$6 55 in the Treasury. Every dollar of this was given voluntarily.”

The scenes of suffering and destitution discovered by these visitations in the homes of the poor, excited the ladies to a renewed effort in the same direction, and to a determination, if possible, to continue and enlarge the work. The first annual report makes the following statement :

“ As the fall came on and the school building was filled with students, the executive committee were forced to face the question, Whether the deaconess work should be abandoned, or larger financial responsibility incurred. The great and almost unoccupied field before such workers, the lack of other organization for city mission work, and especially the significant fact that women were found—both graduates from the school and others—willing to devote their time to the work without salary—these all appealed so loudly to the committee that they voted to continue the work ‘so long as God should incline the hearts of his people to support it.’ A flat was rented, furniture donated, and the work was there carried on during the winter of 1887–88 under the wise matronship of Miss Isabella Thoburn, temporarily home from India.

“ May 1, 1888, the rented house was given up,

and the deaconesses are accommodated again during the school vacation in the convenient Training School building. But a decided step has now been taken to give them a permanent home. The building next door to the Training School has been purchased for them, and, while not yet paid for, a beginning has been made in that direction. One lady gave, entirely unsolicited, nearly five thousand dollars, and in the morning mail the very day these lines are being penned, a five hundred dollar check, from another lady, was modestly inclosed in a plain white envelope. This gift also was entirely unsolicited. With such tokens of good from the Lord may we not confidently expect 'all we need?'

The dates above given show that this institution is in its infancy, but its foundations have been laid in faith and prayer; and its earnest appeals are eliciting such responses from the Church as indicate a grand future, and great usefulness.

The annual expenditure for each deaconess engaged in the work is about \$250; and an effort is being made to secure supporting patrons who will put a substitute into the field. This will certainly commend itself to the pious and affluent. In the nation's crisis substitutes took the place of men who could not enter the ranks; they did good service in the country's hour of need; so in this moral conflict the wealthy women of the Church should, and doubtless will, furnish the means to send those sisters into

the field who have no domestic ties to bind them to home and family.

“The members in the home are divided into two classes for their work : those who are being sent out as nurses among the sick, and those who do visiting and teaching, conducting mothers’ and children’s meetings. For these services the workers receive only their board and expenses, some even paying their board or expenses, or both.” Such is the origin of the first deaconess home connected with the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States.

The need of these Christian workers was sorely felt in our foreign missions. The want was supplied in our German work. The matter had long rested upon the mind of Dr. J. M. Thoburn, now Bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church in India. He had seen the necessity of increasing the force of female workers and of enlarging their sphere in evangelistic work in connection with missions in India.

In 1888 the Church was ready for an onward movement, and for a recognition of the deaconess as a church official, and one of its working forces. At the General Conference, held in New York, May, 1888, the subject, with all papers relating thereto, was referred to the Committee on Missions, of whom Dr. Thoburn was chairman. The committee reported the following, which was adopted, and is now the law of the Church :

## “DEACONESSES.

“1. The duties of the deaconesses are to minister to the poor, visit the sick, pray with the dying, care for the orphan, seek the wandering, comfort the sorrowing, save the sinning, and relinquishing wholly all other pursuits, devote themselves, in a general way, to such forms of Christian labor as may be suited to their abilities.

“2. No vow shall be exacted from any deaconess, and any one of their number shall be at liberty to relinquish her position as a deaconess at any time.

“3. In every Annual Conference within which deaconesses may be employed, a Conference board of nine members, at least three of whom shall be women, shall be appointed by the Conference to exercise a general control of the interests of this form of work.

“4. This board shall be empowered to issue certificates to duly qualified persons, authorizing them to perform the duties of deaconesses in connection with the Church, provided that no person shall receive such certificate until she shall have served a probation of two years of continuous service, and shall be over twenty-five years of age.

“5. No person shall be licensed by the Board of Deaconesses except on the recommendation of a Quarterly Conference, and said Board of Deaconesses shall be appointed by the Annual Conference

for such term of service as the Annual Conference shall decide, and said board shall report both the names and work of such deaconesses annually, and the approval of the Annual Conference shall be necessary for the continuance of any deaconess in her work.

“6. When working singly, each deaconess shall be under the direction of the pastor of the church with which she is connected. When associated together in a home, all the members of the home shall be subordinate to and directed by the superintendent placed in charge.

“J. M. THOBURN, *Chairman.*

“A. B. LEONARD, *Secretary.*”

This was incorporated in the Book of Discipline, and must for four years remain the law under which the Church will act.

It will be observed that the deaconess, like all officers in the Methodist Episcopal Church having ministerial functions, originates in the Quarterly Conference, and it must be in this body that the religious qualifications of the applicant will be adjudged.

In other Churches the applicant must bring among other testimonials a certificate of baptism and a certificate from her pastor. It must not be supposed that the Methodist Episcopal Church is less cautious than others about the religious attainments of candidates for the office because the law



does not specify any moral standard. "No person shall be licensed by the Board of Deaconesses except on the recommendation of a Quarterly Conference." This body consists of every officer of the local church, and is presided over by the presiding elder, who is a member of the bishop's cabinet or council. This body, following the analogy furnished by the licensing of local preachers, will inquire into "the gifts, grace, and usefulness" of such candidate, and the way will be rigidly barred against all who cannot furnish satisfactory evidence of a good, clear, religious experience and a pure moral life.

The law may not be all that is necessary for the proper development of the institution, but time and experience will suggest what is best, and the law can be changed from time to time to meet the demands of the work. The great thing is to have the order recognized as a part of the organized Church. However defective the law may be, the germ of something great is in it. The details of dress and pay and educational qualifications were wisely left to the local boards and for future consideration.

The first paragraph on "the duties of the deaconess" recognized the line of work to which she has been assigned in all the ages. A ministry to the poor, the sick, the orphan, the wandering, the sorrowing, and the sinning. She will not supersede nor take the place of other Christian women in these lines of labor: thousands have rendered most valuable service,

and thousands more will follow in this consecration to Christ and his representatives; but she will be distinguished from them in that she will relinquish "wholly all other pursuits," and devote herself "in a general way to such forms of Christian labor as may be suited to her abilities."

The second paragraph forbids the exaction of vows. This is in accordance with the best view of Christian truth and propriety. It is Protestant in principle, and in keeping with the freedom of the days in which we live.

The other paragraphs define the relation of the deaconess to the Church and the method of selection and appointment, and are more liable to change as the organization is perfected and the work of the order developed.

As the Deaconess Home in connection with the Chicago Training School for Home and Foreign Missions was in successful operation before the enactment of the law by the General Conference, it was natural that the Rock River Conference, within whose bounds it is located, should take the initiative under the law. This they did. At the conference held October, 1888, a "Conference board of nine members" was appointed "to exercise a general control of the interests of this form of work." Several other Conferences, including Philadelphia, have followed the example. Deaconess homes are now being established in New York, Philadelphia, Cincinnati, and other great centers of

population, east and west, of which it is now too early to speak in detail. The Elizabeth Gamble Deaconess Home has been founded in Cincinnati by Mr. Gamble as a monument to the memory of his sainted wife, whose name it bears. It is under the superintendence of Miss Isabella Thoburn, for many years a successful missionary in India. On account of the widespread interest and the inauguration of a number of deaconess homes, a conference was called of all who were practically interested in the work, for the purpose of promoting uniformity in methods of procedure in the incorporation of the institutions, courses of study, dress, etc. They met in Chicago, December 20 and 21, 1888, when the following plan was adopted and recommended to all similar institutions :

### I. DEACONESS HOMES.

1. That, wherever practicable, every deaconess home be incorporated.

2. That the form of constitution adopted embody the following provisions :

*a.* The corporate or other name of this institution is the — Deaconess Home of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

*b.* The object for which this institution is established is to promote the work of deaconesses as recognized by the Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church ; to provide homes for them ; to give necessary support and instruction to them ; and, as far as

practicable, to provide for such forms of Christian charity as may be developed in the prosecution of their work.

*c.* If incorporated, the number of trustees of this institution shall be not less than nine nor more than thirteen, at least two thirds of whom shall be members in good standing in the Methodist Episcopal Church, and of whom not less than five shall constitute a quorum.

*d.* The mode of election and perpetuation of trustees to be in conformity with State law.

3. That, in addition to such other meetings as may be jointly held, the trustees, or controlling board, of each deaconess home annually meet with the Board of Deaconesses of the Conference within the bounds of which it is located, at which time a full report of the work of the home for the year preceding shall be presented.

4. That no change of the general policy or management of a deaconess home be made without the consent of at least two thirds of the Board of Deaconesses of the Conference within the bounds of which it is located.

## II. CONDITIONS OF ADMISSION.

### A. *Age*, etc.

1. That all applicants be received on three months' trial, more or less, at the option of the trustees or managers, during which time they are to receive their board, if desired.

2. After serving satisfactorily on trial they may be admitted, if of sufficient age, as probationers, or if less than twenty-three years of age as members, of the home, provided they be not deemed eligible to probation for the office of deaconess until twenty-three years of age; and provided, further, that it be their intention to ultimately seek entrance into the office of deaconess.

3. That none be admitted as candidates who are more than forty years of age, except by unanimous consent of the trustees or managers.

4. That those admitted into a deaconess home consent to observe the established rules and regulations and abide by the decision of the superintendent, cheerfully giving all their time to the work assigned them as visitors and nurses or to the prescribed preparation for work.

#### *B. Dress.*

That a simple uniform be worn, sufficient for protection and recognition in their work, and that the same uniform be adopted by all deaconess homes.

#### *C. Support.*

1. That approved applicants may be admitted as members of the home on one of the following conditions:

*a.* That they pay their board and expenses.

*b.* That they pay their expenses only.

*c.* That they pay neither their board nor expenses.

2. That candidates under the last condition be entitled to comfortable maintenance and clothing during their connection with the home, in conformity with its regulations.

3. That no salaries be paid, but the work of the deaconesses be on the basis of self-sacrifice "for Jesus' sake."

4. That none solicit money unless duly authorized.

5. That all donations and money received, where service is rendered, be paid into the treasury of the home, to be applied toward its expenses.

In the absence of any specification by the Discipline, as to the standard of preparation required, we recommend the following :

### III. COURSE OF STUDY AND PLAN FOR TRAINING.

1. That the two years of "continuous service" required by the Discipline be spent in careful training whenever possible, in a training-school, or such literary institution as shall make provision for the course of study recommended, residence being, so far as possible, in a deaconess home ; or, in case of such as are making special preparation for becoming trained nurses, in a hospital.

2. For both classes the first year's training shall be mainly theoretical, and the second year's practical.

3. Subjects for study and reading :

## FIRST YEAR.

*a.* By those not preparing to become trained nurses :

- (1.) English Bible, book by book.
- (2.) The Discipline.
- (3.) Catechism No. 3.
- (4.) Theological Compend.—*Binney*.
- (5.) Smaller History of the Bible.—*Smith*.
- (6.) Life of Christ.—*Stalker*.
- (7.) Bible Geography.—*Hurlbut*.
- (8.) Church History.—*Hurst*.
- (9.) Compendium of Methodism.—*Porter*.

*b.* To be studied by those preparing to become trained nurses :

- (1.) The English Bible, book by book.
- (2.) The Discipline.
- (3.) Catechism No. 3.
- (4.) Physiology.—*Hutchinson*.
- (5.) Clara Week's Nursing Manual.
- (6.) New Haven Nursing Manual.

And the theoretical instruction prescribed by the faculty of any standard training-school for nurses, together with such practical work in the hospital wards, under the superintending nurse, as does not seriously conflict with the course of study.

*c.* Recommended to be read :

- (1.) The Philosophy of the Plan of Salvation.—*Walker*.
- (2.) How to Study the Bible.—*Moody*.

(3.) Life of Elizabeth Fry.

(4.) The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life.—*Smith.*

(5.) Una and Her Paupers.

#### SECOND YEAR.

*a.* With the practical work of this year the following course of reading to be pursued by both classes:

(1.) Life of Christ.—*Geikie.*

(2.) Life of John Wesley.—*Watson.*

(3.) Life of Sister Dora.

(4.) Woman and Temperance.—*Frances E. Willard.*

(5.) Women of Methodism.

(6.) Outlines of the World's History.—*Swinton.*

(7.) School History of the United States.—*Ridpath.*

(8.) How we Live; or, The Human Body, and How to Take Care of It.

(9.) Quiz Compend. on Obstetrics.—*Landis.* (For nurses only.)

*b.* Recommended to be read:

(1.) Ages before Moses.—*Gibson.*

(2.) The Mosaic Age.—*Gibson.*

(3.) Life of Paul.—*Conybeare and Howson.*

(4.) Butler's Analogy.

4. Candidates preparing for work among foreign-speaking people, at home or abroad, are recommended



to make preparation in the language, etc., of those among whom they expect to labor.

5. That no license be issued by any Conference Board of Deaconesses until a satisfactory written examination has been passed in all the subjects of study, and also in the rudiments of a common-school education.

6. That the certificate of a regular physician to the good health of the candidates be also required as a condition for license.

7. That the recommendation of a Quarterly Conference be required before one be deemed a deaconess probationer, and that in all cases a certificate from a Quarterly Conference as to two years' continuous service be required before license be granted to a deaconess.

While recognizing the importance of developing training-schools at several important points, where there may be exceptional advantages for such purposes, it is earnestly recommended that training-schools be not indiscriminately multiplied.

The Chicago Training School for City, Home, and Foreign Missions being in successful operation, and the curriculum essentially covering that recommended for deaconesses, we earnestly recommend that, pending the establishment of other similar schools, applicants for deaconesses' license take the first year's training at the Chicago Training School.

CHAS. R. NORTH, *Chairman*,  
New York city.

J. SHELLY MEYER, *Secretary*, Chicago, Ill.

This conference we regard as a very important step connected with the general movement, and its results will be sufficient to guide in the establishment of homes and the development of the deaconess work until the next General Conference.

There are some features in the above plan which are worthy of remark :

#### DEACONESS HOMES.

The object for which this institution is established is to promote the work of deaconesses as recognized by the Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church. This work is clearly defined in the first paragraph of the law ; \* also, "to provide homes for them." In every large city where a home is established, that home will be the center whence all the deaconesses will go, and to which they will return from the nursing, teaching, or mission work in which they are severally engaged. Experience has shown that greater progress in knowledge and work is made by the deaconesses thus associated than when they are separated and working alone. In large cities, where many churches are located, the parish deaconess assigned to a single church can devote herself to one congregation and have her home in the institution. Even where this cannot be the case, if sent to some distant station she will retain her affection and interest in the institution where she was trained and

\* Discipline, ¶ 207.

where her first associations in the diaconate were formed. The *esprit de corps* will be maintained, and, wherever sent to labor, the deaconesses will be a band of sisters bound by mutual ties. The corporate feeling will be strong though the members be scattered. "The emblem of the dove with the olive branch, which is a familiar wood-cut on the printed papers of Kaiserswerth, is suggestive not only of the character and mission of those who are sent forth, but of the home to which all of them belong," and to which they gladly return.

A wide field for the philanthropy of the Church is suggested in the plan when it declares the object of the home to be, as far as practicable, "to provide for such forms of Christian charity as may be developed in the prosecution of their work."

Around the deaconess institutions of Germany and England various forms of charitable work have been organized, such as hospitals, schools, orphanages, homes for the aged, etc. These serve more than one object. They are benevolent and Christian in their purpose, offering relief to the poor and suffering, and are training-places for probationers and deaconesses, who there learn by practice the art of ministering to the sick in body and mind.

Does it not seem providential that in Methodism the deaconess movement and the establishment of hospitals and orphanages are coeval? In the future, no doubt, the one will be closely related to the other.

The deaconess home seems to be the necessary complement to the hospital.

The care and support of the indigent sick and the healing of the maladies that afflict mankind is a work that peculiarly belongs to the Church of Christ. A careful reading of the Bible will show how closely the work of the promised Messiah, the man Christ Jesus, was connected with the alleviation of physical misery, as well as bringing salvation to the lost. That he should thus appear was distinctly foretold by Isaiah, "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows." The word translated "griefs" signifies bodily disease and sickness. This prophecy was literally fulfilled by Christ: "And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the Gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people"—teaching, preaching, healing.

The physical evils that cluster about humanity presented to the Redeemer of mankind a marvelous theater for the display of the remedial power of the Son of God, and for the display of his greater power and benevolence in the forgiveness of their sins. During the whole of his earthly ministry the Saviour appeared before the people in the twofold character of the great Physician and the great Redeemer. If the Church hears and obeys his great commission: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature," she may count among the signs fol-

lowing, "They shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover"—not in the line of the miraculous, but in the line of charitable deeds, which are more beneficent.

In this, as in every thing else, the Church has failed to do her whole duty; but from the days of Christ until now we may trace the Church's path among the nations by her healing virtues, and the light, health, and life that have sprung up in her course. The words of Christ have brought healing to the soul, and charities instituted by the Church have done much to alleviate the sorrows of mankind.

Hospitals for the sick, the aged, the helpless, and the poor are really outgrowths of Christianity. They do not exist to any appreciable extent where the Gospel is not known, and they did not exist before the days of Christ. "The hospital is the monument erected by the Church to the memory of her Lord's stretching forth his hand to heal. Even more than places of worship this was the characteristic mark of a Christianized society. The temple at Jerusalem had been standing for ages. The synagogues were of ancient date. The pagans worshiped in groves and high places. The Greeks and Romans piled their magnificent architecture to the gods. Men were familiar with what answered to churches; but asylums for the wretched, hospitals for the sick were yet unknown in the world; they were the product of the Christian Church."

Were we able to trace the history of this class of institutions, we would find that most of them originated in the piety and benevolence of some individual or Church who wished to honor God and bless mankind, and they have been supported in perpetuity by the liberality of the followers of Christ.

In all countries many of them are designated by names that indicate the close relation they bear to the Church of Christ: "Hotel Dieu," or God's Hospital, Christ's Hospital, The Hospital of the Holy Ghost, The Hospital of the Holy Trinity. More frequently the names of the evangelists and saints are applied to them.

These institutions have not arisen as the result of any positive command of Christ, but from the principles of his Gospel and the force of his example. The spirit of love and self-sacrifice lay at the foundation of Christ's work, and these must permeate the organic body which is the representative of Christ on earth. The fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man, as taught by Christ, lead us to care for the poor and the unfortunate, because we recognize in them the relationship to God and to ourselves. The full measure of the Gospel's work for man is not done when the mind is instructed and the heart regenerated. It does not expend its full force in preaching and teaching. As all suffering is the outgrowth of sin, so love, which lies at the base of

redemption, will suggest healing agencies for the body as well as salvation for the soul.

The sick and unfortunate are largely provided for by the State; but, considering all the wants of man, this cannot well be done by the State in purely secular institutions. There is a department in this work which the Church alone can fill. It is common to seek for bodily healing, religious instruction, and consolation at the same time. The mind is often prepared for spiritual truth by affliction.

"The best fruit loads the broken bough;  
And in the wounds our sufferings plow  
Immortal Love sows sovereign seed."

This demand for religious instruction and consolation cannot well be met by the State; the genius of our government forbids it. If met in any sense it would not be as thorough, earnest, or consistent as that furnished by any branch of the Church of Christ. This at least indicates the propriety of hospitals for the dependent classes furnished by and under the control of the Christian denominations.

We think it is high time that the Methodist Episcopal Church should enter more largely upon this branch of Christian work and philanthropy. Our benevolent societies and our evangelistic labor are indications of our liberality and zeal. May our hospitals soon be located in every large city, and become representative of the Church's philanthropy, centers of medical knowledge and surgical skill, and the source

of healing and spiritual comfort to tens of thousands of the unfortunate among mankind!

At no very distant day we hope to see hospitals, orphanages, and homes for the aged under the care of deaconesses; godly women who have been tried and found faithful, who have been instructed and therefore competent to take care of the body, inform the mind, and feed the moral nature with religious truth, leading the soul to God through Jesus Christ.

#### COURSE OF STUDY AND PLAN FOR TRAINING.

The course of study and reading indicates a determination to place this office and work on a more than ordinary intellectual and educational basis. It is sufficiently scriptural and denominational to satisfy the most ardent Methodist. It is cause for congratulation that from the outset the deaconess institutions are to be training-schools for Christian workers. Too much stress cannot be laid on the importance of training. Those who have had the longest acquaintance with this work regard this feature as of the highest importance. This thought lay at the foundation of the German work. "Two ideas seem to have presided over all the working life of Dr. Fliedner: first, that a *female* 'Diakonie' is required by the Church of modern times; and, secondly, that this 'Diakonie' to be efficient must be trained."

This training, to be of real value, must be system-



atic, and of a threefold character—intellectual, practical, and religious.

The intellectual will include the theoretical. The practical will be obtained in actual work in the schools, hospitals, orphanages, and in the homes of poverty and sickness, and at the bedside of the dying.

Close attention must be paid to the training of the deaconess in religious work. Not only should she be deeply pious, having a good experience of divine truth, but she must know how to impart religious truth to others. Fliedner said: "How, unless she is instructed, can the deaconess administer at night those spiritual drops which are often worth more than a whole sermon?" The deaconess must be trained by methodical habits of study and devotion for religious teaching, and be able to apply the word of God to the hearts of those to whom she ministers according to the needs of the patient or penitent. She must be able, under favorable and unfavorable circumstances, to offer audible prayer, and if she can sing the songs of Zion, and by sacred melody move the hearts of those whom she tries to save, it will be a great gain.

The rules of some institutions, prescribing very minutely the hours of prayer, meditation, and other forms of devotion, seem too mechanical and ascetic; yet the *habit of devotion* must be cultivated, and the "home" must be the place where the deaconess can be replenished and in every sense equipped for the field of labor. It must be her "Tabor," where she

holds converse with God and gathers new glory and strength for the conflict with unbelief, disease, and all the forms of sin.

It must be a *retreat* where devotion predominates, love rules, and Christ is supreme; the council chamber where victories are recounted and new plans laid, and where the joyful soul shall stimulate the despondent, and each shall help all, and all shall promote the interest of the one family and the glory of the one Master.

#### DRESS.

“That a simple uniform be worn sufficient for protection and recognition in their work, and that the same uniform be adopted by all deaconess homes.” There were persons present in the Conference when this recommendation was adopted who had given this subject more than a passing thought, and we may regard this as the best judgment of all. It certainly coincides with that of those who have had much to do with the deaconess work, and follows the practice of almost every deaconess institution with which we are acquainted. Some think it a trivial matter, others condemn it; we think it important.

If the dress is not uniform in its main features, it must be left to the taste and discretion of each individual. Nothing differs more widely than taste in dress. The religious work of the order is likely to be marred without this uniformity. Some will engage in it who are poor and others who are rich; if left to

individual taste in dress, one will be richly and the other poorly clad. Some will appear in plain and simple style, and others in bright colors and fashionable attire. Rich and costly dress at the bedside of the hospital patient and in the homes of the destitute is incongruous. All deaconesses, whatever their former position, while employed in the work, are on a social level. Uniformity in dress in a large institution is a matter of great practical economy.

A conference held at Kaiserswerth "pronounced unanimously for a distinctive dress, and summed up its advantages thus: It made the sisters known at once alike to their charge and the public, inspired confidence in them as servants of the Church and of Christian charity, protected them from the rudeness of the mob, rendered them less subject to vanity, and less disturbed by changes of fashion, besides saving much expenditure." It is added, however, that the dress ought to be as simple and as little peculiar as possible, and in harmony with the directions of St. Paul and St. Peter. 1 Tim. ii, 9, 10; 1 Pet. iii, 3. It was once suggested to Fliedner by the king of Prussia that the deaconesses should wear a silver cross, but he opposed it as being suggestive of a "shibboleth of Romanism;" but the deaconesses of the Lutheran Church in the United States have adopted the silver cross. This will not commend itself to the deaconesses of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

Some German critics of Fliedner's work objected

to the distinctive dress as inclining toward the Church of Rome; but in answer to them Schaefer quotes from Martin Luther, who advised certain orders to retain their dress after they had embraced the doctrines of the Reformation. "Your garb and other laudable usages do not harm the Gospel, to the contrary, they aid it in its fight against the unbridled minds which nowadays know only how to pull down, but not to rebuild again." \*

Of the present advantages of the distinctive dress the same writer observes: "By their peculiar dress the sisters escape the tyranny and frivolity of fashion. Their dress is cheap, as they obtain the material first at wholesale prices from the manufactory; it is eminently practical, for in every detail the prime consideration has been kept in view to enable the sisters to work. The dress of a deaconess is a constant reminder of the dignity of her calling; it is also a protection, for in this attire the sister will remain unmolested at all times and in all places where it would be impossible for other women not to be molested. Her dress is the passport which rarely speaks in vain. The sister is always seen in her costume, even when watching at night. She is forbidden to appear in *negligé*. The three different grades of probationer, novice, and deaconess are expressed by the dress." †

The distinctive dress of the Methodist deaconess

\* *Die Wiebliche Diakonie*, vol. i, p. 227.

† *Ibid.*, vol. iii, p. 88.

should differ from that now worn by other deaconesses and the use of it should be optional with her when not working or journeying in the interest of the order.

The call for deaconesses is probably greater in our foreign mission fields than in our home cities and churches. Great as is the suffering in cities in Christian lands where numerous churches and other Christian institutions are planted, it is much greater in heathen cities, where degradation and vice prevail without the ameliorating influences of the Gospel of Christ. Especially are deaconesses a necessity for Christian evangelization in the Orient, where women are more jealously secluded than they were among ancient Greeks or Romans.

At the General Conference of 1888 the Bengal Annual Conference, through Dr. J. M. Thoburn, presented memorials praying for the recognition of the order of deaconesses. The difficulties connected with administering the sacraments to the converted women of India have long been seriously felt. So long accustomed to seclusion they instinctively shrink from the touch of man, even in Christian baptism.

The early Church fathers felt the necessity of having the deaconess assist in the administration of this rite for the sake of decency; but they were not as much needed then as now in our foreign missions. The cause of Christ would be much advanced if deaconesses should be ordained to administer this

sacrament to their own sex. This was contemplated in the memorial of the Bengal Conference.\* “Dr. J. T. Gracey, long a missionary in India, says that thousands of women might have been baptized had the sisters, who alone were admitted to the zenanas, and who led these women to Christ, been permitted to perform the service.”† Other prominent missionaries, men and women, have expressed substantially the views of Dr. Gracey.

To meet this want, so far as the law of the Church will permit, Bishop J. M. Thoburn has put his thought into practical form, and has established in the city of Calcutta the first deaconess home in India. For this purpose he took with him four American ladies, who are under the direction of himself and wife, Mrs. Anna Thoburn, M.D. We believe this to be the nucleus of what will become one of the grandest evangelistic agencies that India has ever seen.

There is also a deaconess home established, and partially endowed, in Muttra, within the boundaries of the North India Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and now in charge of our veteran missionary, Miss Fannie J. Sparkes, who has had the training of many native females in the Orphanage in Bareilly, which was in her charge for twelve or fifteen years. When these homes are established in all our mission fields the native women

\* *General Conference Journal*, 1888, p. 100.

† *Woman in the Pulpit*, p. 81.

can be trained in Christian work, and can do much for the redemption of their own sex in their native land. History shows that this has always been God's order. A tribe, nation, or race must be evangelized, and the institutions of Christianity perpetuated, chiefly by the agency of members of that race. Others may plant and supervise, but the work must ultimately devolve on native agencies.

In any field where women are not employed as agents for the dissemination of truth, women are not reached; the mission is shorn of half its strength, and the work is retarded.

In treating of deaconesses in connection with the Methodist Episcopal Church, it is worthy of remark that it is the first branch of the Church of Christ in modern times that has incorporated the deaconess work as an integral part of its organization and made the deaconess an officer of the Church by its organic law. The various Protestant communions have been very slow in providing for the office of the female diaconate in their constitutions.

The recognition of the deaconess as an ecclesiastical officer by the law of the State churches of the Fatherland is a difficult and delicate matter, as the German churches have no free corporate organization. But the prominent leaders and Churchmen have shown their highest appreciation and approbation of the work, and have co-operated in its establishment and extension. The General Council of

the American Lutheran Church and the synod of Pennsylvania have recognized the deaconess work, but have made no provision for it in the constitution or in the Book of Worship.

The Protestant Episcopal Church has not incorporated it. The deaconess is unknown in its canons, and although as a Christian worker she is employed and encouraged, and is inducted to office by solemn and impressive forms, these are not found in the Book of Common Prayer. The Church of England has encouraged the movement and has eight deaconess establishments connected with the dioceses within which they are located. The deaconess has been consecrated by the imposition of hands by the episcopacy, but she is not recognized in the canons, and her relation to the Church is so doubtful as to be a matter of controversy among Churchmen.

But under the impulse given to this work by the example and wonderful success of Kaiserswerth these institutions have grown up under the wing of almost all denominations, and the Church has been a foster-mother to them. They are hers by adoption, not by natural birth. Nearly all communions are reaching after a closer union with them. The Church of England is striving after a more general organization, but all her efforts in the past are detached and form no part of a complete system.

The great English institution at Mildmay and others like it are the outgrowth of the faith of a few



brave souls who have trusted in God and moved forward. The officers as such are not responsible to any Church, and no Church is responsible for them, though clergymen and bishops may heartily sympathize. The English and German institutions are only responsible to those who combine to maintain them.

The step taken by the Methodist Episcopal Church is therefore one of very great importance, and will reflect great honor upon her. It is not a small thing to be the first Church in Protestantism to make the organization of woman's work a branch of the general organization of the Church, under the control of her several judicatories. It indicates the readiness of Methodism to adopt any measure that proves its adaptation to the wants of the times, and it reveals the elasticity of the system which can incorporate and assimilate a working force so extensive as this promises to be.

The future will more than realize the flight of fancy of one of its advocates. "It seems to me, when I look forward and think about the great army of consecrated workers that God will raise up, as if I could hear the tread of angels' feet on all the streets of our great cities. I believe that God is about to raise up an army of women workers, such as you know nothing about; such as I myself have never dreamed of. There is no form of Church work these women will not do. All they ask is to give them the right of control and proper recognition;

and, take my word for it, God's blessing will be upon the action, and you will live to see the day when the hope which I have expressed will be more than realized." \*

At the present time, when the work is but just begun and is not known to the Church beyond a limited circle, the demand for deaconesses is so large it cannot be met. Congregations in the great cities are ready to adopt and provide for the movement and are calling for these trained laborers to send them forth to bring the suffering and sinful to the sheltering arms of Christ. "Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields: for they are white already to the harvest."

\* Dr. Thoburn, Debate in General Conference, 1888.

## CHAPTER XVI.

## CONCLUSION.

THE varied developments of civilization create new conditions and wants. As these are felt efforts are made to supply them. New industries are called into existence, and the "lost arts" are revived, or new applications made of old ones. This is no more true of secular than of moral and religious things.

A great change has taken place within a half century in the relative proportions of population in city and country, and in their relation to religious truth and instruction. The new forms of religious labor and philanthropy to which the nineteenth century has given birth have scarcely kept pace with the wants of the people. The tendency of the age is to bring vast masses of people together in cities, and this increases both poverty and crime. The tenement houses become crowded, disease is engendered, and the physical and moral condition of the people become lamentable in the extreme. The more dense the population the greater the suffering, degradation, and vice.

Philadelphia does not compare with New York, and London is worse than either. It is so bad that even the bare statement of facts without coloring or

fancy does violence to all modesty and propriety. To every thoughtful mind this is a matter of serious reflection. As fast as our population increases we are tending to the same state of things.

“During the half century preceding 1880 population in the cities increased more than four times as rapidly as that of the village and country. In the year 1800 there were only six cities in the United States which had a population of eight thousand or more. In 1880 there were two hundred and eighty-six.” \*

There is another fact closely related to this which should be borne in mind ; at the same time that there is a great influx of the working classes to our cities there is a very considerable efflux of the rich and cultured to our suburban towns for family residences. This is constantly increasing as our manufacturers grow rich and the working classes grow poor. Churches lose their wealthy, intelligent, paying members, and after a few years of struggle the congregation disbands, the edifice is sold for business purposes, the wealthy find more congenial surroundings, and the poor are left in their poverty with fewer moral influences around them and in greater spiritual destitution than ever. There is but little more affinity or affiliation between the average rich manufacturer and his operatives than there is between him and the machines that make his wares. They are left in

\* Josiah Strong, D.D., *Our Country*, p. 120.

courts and alleys to seethe and fester in moral corruption and sin with scarcely a hand extended to save them, apparently forsaken by the Church, if not by God and man.

We have alluded to the above facts simply to show that there is more work for Christian women to do now than in any previous period in the history of the Church. If the physical miseries of the poor are ever to be ameliorated, and their moral maladies healed; if there ever come to them the sympathy born of Christian principle, and the counsel that springs from Christian intelligence, they must be carried to them by those impelled by the love of God. If their homes are ever lit up by Gospel truth it must be sent by Christian philanthropy and borne by Christian women. Men cannot do it if they would, the proprieties of life forbid it.

They cannot enter the dwellings of the sick and poor, renovate the house, instruct the children, and nurse the wife and mother. It is gentle care and tact, the instinctive good sense and the love of Christian women that are most wanted to brighten the homes and correct the habits of the degraded part of our population.

Those who have given the matter much thought know that these demands cannot be met by personal labor and benevolence without organization. The stream of beneficence and work must be as steady and unceasing as the stream of poverty and degrada-

tion. We know of nothing at present that meets the demand. Societies to aid the poor in temporal things, organizations to furnish fuel and food to the cold and hungry are generally unsympathetic. They do not feed the soul, or fan the dying embers of hope, or direct the penitent to the fountain of cleansing. All this the deaconess will do. She can be the almoner of the Church's liberality to the destitute. She will, more than any other officer of the Church, literally feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the sick and those in prison, and offer the balm of Gospel grace to the penitent and broken-hearted.

The need of woman's work as an organized force was never felt as now. Her power for the subduing of moral evil, the amelioration of suffering, and the successful prosecution of moral reforms was never so generally conceded. Her adaptation to religious work is recognized and her admission to ecclesiastical office is called for in every branch of the Church of Christ. She is adapted to do that kind of work which the Church has largely failed to do, and failed because she refused to employ woman as one of her chief agencies. The Church has tried to fulfill her mission of good to the world with her left hand paralyzed, and has been unable to effect a straightforward passage to her desired haven, as a man who attempts to cross a stream with but a single oar to his boat.

Woman has already demonstrated her ability to grapple with all difficulties in every sphere that has

been opened to her, and has overcome them. She has shown her wisdom and power in formulating great plans and in executing them. She is no mere weakling that must be held in tutelage, guided and restrained lest she do some unwomanly thing that shall cast a shadow upon her honor or fame. Give her a fair opportunity to do her share of social and religious work and means of instruction to do it well.

There are thousands of women in every branch of the Christian Church, with latent powers for good that are immeasurable, waiting for some trumpet voice to call and a guiding hand to organize, and when these come they will go forth to make the desert blossom like the rose.

Dr. T. M. Eddy said: "O for woman's full power in the Church! Woman, God's evangel at home and elsewhere; woman telling, with wifely love and sisterly tenderness and motherly sanctity, how the lost may be found, the wanderer saved! Woman reaching out her hands to save those that are toppling down to hell! O woman, will you comprehend your power? When I see women following fashion blindly; when I see her throwing away her influence; when I see her sanction of irreligious social life; when I see reckless prodigality instead of self-denying thrift, my soul cries out in strong desire for the entire consecration of the women of the Church to the work of God and the elevation of the race. O for woman's full

power on the broad field of Christian achievement!"

The Roman Catholic Church, from the earliest ages, has utilized the talent and devotion of woman for Church aggrandizement. This she is doing at the present day, not only in Spain and Italy, where Romanism is supreme, but in the United States, where it stands exposed to public scrutiny and must rely upon its practical worth alone for support, as that worth is estimated by its adherents. The immense establishments built up in this country are standing monuments to the vitality of the Romish diaconal monachism in the female sex. Catholicism owes much of its growth, wealth, and power in this land to this instrumentality of the "sisters." Their acts of self-sacrifice, their devotion and kindness to the poor, often commend them to Protestants, who cannot but admire the Spirit of Christ in them though marred by the spirit of the propagandist.

A Methodist preacher in a western city, in his pastoral visitations, found a Sister of Charity in a Protestant home where the wife and mother lay dying. She nursed the woman, kept the children clean, swept or mopped the floor, and performed other menial but kindly offices for the distressed family. When the Methodist pastor baptized the dying woman, the Catholic sister held the bowl of water; and after the mother died and the family were broken up she took the children to an orphanage which was waiting to



receive them. "This," says the preacher, "was right; she had earned them. This is applied Christianity."

Why should not Methodism use this mighty arm of power to the fullest extent to accomplish good for man and for proper Church aggrandizement? Methodism is often represented as the counterpart of Romanism in the efficiency and completeness of its organization. We glory in our system as a grand piece of ecclesiastical machinery for the evangelization of the world, while we need not affirm, because it is known to all intelligent persons, that there is no prelatial assumption and nothing that binds the consciences of men.

Professor Goldwin Smith once said to the writer: "I regard the Methodist Episcopal Church as the only offset to Roman Catholicism in the United States, and the only ecclesiastical organization that can cope with it in its contest for the masses." The path to the largest success in the evangelization of the people is in the organization of women as an ecclesiastical force in conjunction with our present system. Let not Methodism be driven from the work by the cry of "popery!" already heard from those who are not informed as to the nature and design of the deaconess movement.

The Anglican communion, both in England and in the United States, manifests the same interest in the organized work of woman. She is regarded as an important agent in the application of Christian doc-

trine to the conditions of society among the masses, and also as a religious propagandist. We here adduce a few testimonies from eminent divines of that Church: "The light recently thrown upon the scriptural authority for, and primitive antiquity of, the office of deaconess will surely demonstrate that the revival of that office is indispensable to the fullest and most efficient development of the Church's working powers. . . . Let it be clearly and distinctly proclaimed that the cause of the Master is waiting for woman's help." \*

"I believe women to be indirectly most valuable agents in evangelizing the sinful and ignorant at home and abroad." †

"That women are intended by Christ to work in his Church directly for him appears to me perfectly clear, from the life of our Lord in his own ministry and from the words of the Epistles. . . . I conclude, therefore, that no branch of the Church is perfectly fulfilling the apostolic precept and example which is not making provision for the due employment of women's work. . . . I say that all the works to which such women are devoted are the works of evangelists; that is, whether the work be teaching children, it is not solely or principally the ordinary work of instruction, but the revealing Christ to the child; or laboring among the poor, it is not chiefly for their relief; or among the sick, it is not chiefly as hospital sisters

\* Rev. Henry C. Potter, D.D.

† Bishop of London.

for the relief of the body ; or with the fallen, as the attendants at lock hospitals, merely to heal the body and mend the morals ; but in each case to reveal Christ to the poor, the sick, and the fallen." \*

"I believe that many a man is won by the gentleness and practical unquestioning faith of our deaconesses and sisters, who would simply turn a deaf ear to a clergyman ; and many a woman, callous to ordinary influences, may be gradually restored to feminine softness and humility by frequent intercourse with them." †

Testimonies of like character can be found from prominent ministers in all Churches. We give one from an eminent Presbyterian divine of Scotland : "It is not a little strange that we are familiar with venerable and still active disputes on the position and duties of men appointed to the eldership, as defined in the Epistles to Timothy and Titus, but have been long in obeying the commands of the apostle in the same epistles to enroll and organize the women 'who labor in the Gospel.' The Acts of the Apostles tell of the spiritual endowment and blessed work of women." ‡

The women of Methodism are in no sense behind other denominations in Christian zeal and devotion, intellectual qualifications, or a genius for religious labor. The history of the denomination proves this,

\* Bishop of Winchester.

† Rev. B. Compton, Sec. Dea. Inst.

‡ Dr. Charteris, *Presb. Rev.*

and shows that its success as an evangelizing power is largely due to the zeal and piety of its female members. They have, in a positive experience of the salvation of Christ, the best incentive to works of charity and piety. Obtaining by simple faith the pardon of sin, the regeneration and sanctification of the soul, they have found in the love which this creates the highest motive to a consecrated life. Love inspired by the Holy Ghost is the strongest impelling power to acts of devotion and self-sacrifice.

There is a beauty and Christliness in the consecration of women to the service of the poor and suffering that commend it to our hearts as the clearest reflection of the Spirit of Christ. The highest eulogium pronounced on the Saviour is, "He went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil, for God was with him." There was in Christ's ministry a gracious mingling of physical and moral healing wonderfully adapted to the condition of man. "Thy sins be forgiven thee, arise, take up thy bed, and walk!"

It is precisely this kind of work which the Church seeks to do by the ministry of deaconesses. Always excluding from our thought the miraculous, the deaconess will administer healing to the body, instruction to the mind, and comfort to the soul. This last thought must always be first in mind. She is always and every-where a minister of Jesus Christ seeking to win lost souls. The Bible is her text-book

in which she has been specially instructed, and from which she can bring things, new and old, adapted to every case.

The duties of the modern deaconess are not precisely those of the ancient; it is not essential that they should be. Times and circumstances differ. Technical training was probably unknown in the early Church. But the modern deaconess, to be efficient, must be trained. Skilled labor in every department in life is most in demand. If God calls men or women to a special work, he calls them to a special preparation for it where the facilities are at hand to secure it.

The deaconess home is the training-school, and its chief value lies in the facilities it offers to prepare women for work among the suffering and sinful. It is the drill-ground for the soldier of Christ chafing for the battle.

The foundation of this training for the duties of the diaconate lies in woman's own nature, implanted by the Creator's own hand, who has made her "the best of nurses, the gentlest of alms-givers, the tenderest of educators for the young of both sexes, and the great trainer and moral reformer of her own."

Our cities call loudly for this kind of work in private families and public institutions. Hospitals, orphanages, poor-houses, and prisons call for Christian womanly sympathy and help, and it is within the power of the Church to furnish it by the ministry of

deaconesses. For centuries Christian women have been standing idle in the market-place. The gates of the vineyard are now opening. O woman, enter, and gather the vintage for God!

All the associations of Christian women in Protestantism since the Reformation scarcely touch the field that is to be filled by the deaconess. They have furnished an opportunity for ladies to employ a few leisure hours in the service of the Church, but the deaconess gives herself wholly to the work. Being called of God and the Church, she finds her reward in a consciousness of labor done for *Jesus' sake*.

Nursing is an important feature in the work of the modern deaconess. Immense hospitals were founded in the Middle Ages but failed in efficiency for lack of skill in management. Even as late as the last century in the Hotel Dieu, Paris, "the dying, the dead, and the convalescent might be seen here and there on one and the same couch, separated only by a low board. . . .

"The hospital-nurses in ancient times consisted altogether of persons appointed by the Church, or of volunteers. Throughout the Middle Ages the nursing of the sick was chiefly in the hands of certain societies and orders, like the Knights of St. John, the Teutonic order, the Lazarists, and later on, the Sisters of Mercy. After the Reformation, in Protestant countries, the care of the sick in hospitals was mostly given to paid nurses, the patients faring worse and worse under this arrangement, though the standard

maintained at the present time for nurses is much higher than formerly, both with regard to their technical ability and to their moral character." \*

“In his short history of the origin of the Kaiserswerth institutions Fliedner writes (page 9): ‘The poor sick have long been on my heart. How often have I seen them badly nursed, spiritually neglected, fading away in their unhealthy chambers like the leaves of autumn. For a great many cities, even with a large population, were without hospitals! And even where hospitals were found—and I had seen a great many on my journeys in Holland, Brabant, England, Scotland, and our own Germany—I often found gates and corridors shining with marble, but the care of the suffering bodies was, nevertheless, most miserable. The physicians complained bitterly of the hirelings by day, the hirelings at night; of intoxication and immorality among male and female nurses. Even in Edinburgh, celebrated as it is for its piety and devotion to good works and its charitable institutions, the physicians made such complaint as late as the year 1853. And what shall I say of the spiritual provision for the sick? This was utterly neglected. Hospital preachers were scarcely known in most places, and hospital chapels still less. While in the Netherlands evangelical hospitals had and still have the beautiful name “God’s Houses” (Godshuizen), to indicate that the inmates had their

\* *Phebe the Deaconess*, p. 17.

special visitation from God, who meant to draw them to himself, and chapels and pastors were regularly connected with them, this spiritual care had almost entirely ceased in many parts of the Protestant Church.'” \*

A better state of things now exists, largely by the efforts of Fliedner and those trained by him, but there is still room for improvement. The deaconess, trained technically and religiously, will take the place of the immoral and incompetent. She will be a messenger of God to fulfill the mission of Christ to the sick poor. “The lepers are cleansed, . . . and the poor have the Gospel preached unto them.”

We have seen the deaconess in the German hospital in Philadelphia in neat blue dress and white collar and cap, with cheerful face shining with love to God and man, gliding noiselessly through the wards, nursing the sick, or whispering words of comfort to the dying, at once the skilled and able assistant of the physician and chaplain. We hope soon to see all institutions of this kind that are under the control of the Church in the hands of the order of deaconesses.

There is a large field of usefulness for the parish deaconess, and in this capacity she will be more like the deaconess of the early Church than in any other. That there is an urgent need for this class of laborers, especially in our cities, none can deny. The pastor

\* *Phebe the Deaconess*, p. 18.



of any large church where the population is dense and poor has been deeply convinced of this, and has longed a thousand times for some pious woman who, under the authority of the Church, would devote herself wholly to religious work. He has a thousand calls upon his time which could be better answered by a devoted deaconess than by himself. Visitations upon the sick, finding out the poor and needy, bringing children to the Sabbath-school, going after those who have wandered from the fold of Christ, instructing the ignorant, teaching the children in catechetical classes, leading them to the Saviour, or largely preparing them for intelligent church membership. In the course of a year many families in the congregation may be in distress, and would welcome the presence of the deaconess, and receive her counsel with profound gratitude.

We adopt the following as a picture of city life with which every city pastor is familiar, and with the sentiments of which we entirely agree :

“ There is a house, perhaps in regular connection with the congregation, where the mother is laid upon a sick bed. Early in the morning the house-father has to go to his work, may be with a breakfast hastily prepared by himself. The children hang around all day, unwashed, uncombed. It is impossible to hire a regular sick nurse. It would swallow up the wages of a whole week, and even then it would often be doubtful whether the person secured is reliable in

her character. Then, in the evening, the weary father returns from his work; he finds himself uncomfortable all around; no home, where he could take a rest and gather new strength for the work of tomorrow. But let the parish-sister enter such a house and have her sway in it for a few hours—what a pleasant change! The beds are made, the children properly washed and dressed, the rooms aired, the supper prepared, and by the time the house-father returns in the evening it is as if an angel of God had been under his roof with his hallowing influence. It seems to me that our congregations in this country are especially in need of this kind of labor and assistance. And we might have it to-day if we would only stretch out our hands and grasp the opportunity.” \*

Incidents illustrative of this kind of work sufficient to fill many volumes could be gathered, though the movement be only in its infancy. The diary of a deaconess would furnish much interesting matter to any who wish to know “the simple annals of the poor.”

The following is from a former parishioner of the writer, but now employed in the deaconess work:

“House to house visitation is certainly the best way of reaching the unsaved, and woman can enter the home and do a work that no others can do. Ministers are often debarred an entrance where we

\* *Phebe the Deaconess*, p. 32.

are welcomed. I called upon a sick woman and urged upon her the necessity of repentance and salvation by Christ. My word was not well received. I asked if I should send her a minister. She said, 'No; I am not that far gone yet.' I called again and found her very humble and repentant. She asked my pardon for the manner in which she treated me at my former visit. I pointed her to Christ, and while I spoke and prayed the burden rolled away from her heart, and she rejoiced in God her Saviour. I brought my pastor to her a few days later, and he baptized her, and in a few hours she passed into eternity. I have always found much of this kind of work to do for the Master, and have been blessed by him as I have sat by the dying or prepared them for their last resting-place, or, with help placed in my hands for the purpose, have provided for their temporal wants when in distress.

"Many hearts have been made happier as I have gone from garret to cellar, or visited those whose only home on earth was a little room in an old stable. I have been followed from house to house by Catholic women to hear the prayer I offered. I have read the Bible to them when sick and dying, and their faces have beamed with joy as they heard the sweet message of God. As we go through our district we find people in every degree of want and suffering. Our work is to cheer them in every way possible and better their condition. This we do by sending a

physician, free of charge, getting medicines or food, or sending them to the hospital. We see more suffering and sadness in one week than most people see in a life-time."\*

The labors of these women often lead to the establishment of Sabbath-schools, and even churches, in a way that indicates the special favor of God.

In the city of Chicago a Methodist church, then under the pastorate of Dr. W. C. Willing, employed a Bible-reader, which is but another name for deaconess, to visit from house to house and do missionary work. One Sabbath morning, with Bible in hand, she started out to look up recruits for church and Sunday-school. In her travels she was watched by a young Bohemian who followed her into the church. The young man stayed to the after-meeting, was soon converted, united with the church, was licensed to preach, and in a few months Dr. Willing organized one hundred members into the first Bohemian Methodist church in America. The providential beginning was the faithful work of that devoted young woman who had consecrated her life to the service of God.

We hope the Church will see its duty to "help those women" who labor with us "in the Gospel," by investing them with the sanctions enjoyed in the early Church, setting them apart by prayer and the imposition of hands, invoking the endowments of the

\* Miss Ida B. Simpson, Philadelphia.

Holy Ghost, and throwing around them the sanctities of a formal consecration; thus sending them forth with the advantages of ecclesiastical and divine authority. This is according to the traditions and practices of primitive Christianity, consonant with the principles of Protestantism and Methodism. A solemn induction to office and investiture with religious responsibility lead to deep humility and holy aspirations.

“They the loyal-hearted women are  
Who nobly love the noblest, yet have grace  
For needy suffering souls in lowest places.”

THE END.











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